

# THE AMERICAN I M A G O

VOL. 9

APRIL 1952

NO. 1

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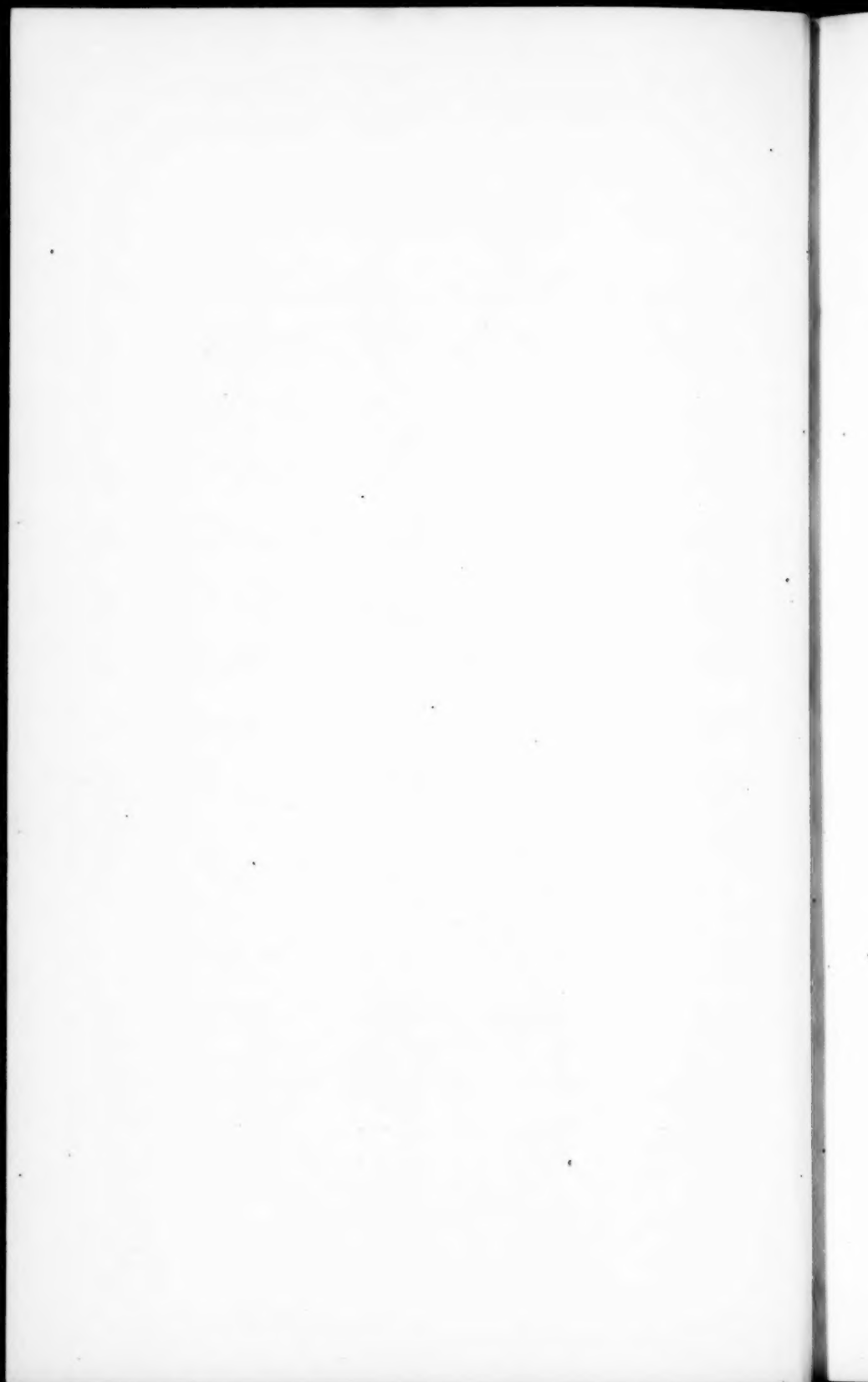
*A Psychoanalytic Journal  
for the Arts and Sciences*

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Founded by: Hanns Sachs, Boston

Publisher and Managing Editor: George B. Wilbur, M. D.

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## The Art of Interviewing and Abstract Art\*

by

Felix Deutsch, M.D.  
Boston

A FEW years ago I dealt with the problem of understanding emotional conditions of people as these were expressed in artistic production. I had chosen poetic art as an example, to show that the artistic expression of a poet may be determined by his neurotic traits and that the choice of specific themes and topics of those writers is intimately related to their personality structure and to their unsolved emotional problems, which they unconsciously discharge in their writings. *Deutsch* (1).

In the following exposition an attempt is made to acquaint the reader with some thoughts about the art of interviewing and of searching through subterranean pathways into the past, where the child's undeveloped ego reigns over body and mind. The resemblance of the mixture of primitive, viz. primary thought processes of that age period to abstract pictorial art will be pointed out.

✓ The problems of the interview are concerned with the interpretation of meaning by the patient, as compared with the intended meaning of the interviewer. If the interviewer suspects that the patient does not understand him, then it is not possible for the interviewer completely to clarify this situation in any finite time merely by talking with him further. If the interviewer asks the patient whether he understands him and the patient confirms it, that does not prove

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\*Lecture delivered at the Smith College School of Social Work June 9th, 1951

that understanding has been achieved. It may just be that the patient did not understand the question.

*Warren Weaver* (2) points out, "that in the restricted field of speech communication, the difficulty may be reduced to a tolerable size, but never completely eliminated by "explanations." They are presumably never more than approximations to the ideas being explained, but are understandable when phrased in language that has previously been made reasonably clear by restrictive and repetitive use of a certain amount of vocabulary."

The problem of influence or effectiveness is related to the success with which the meaning conveyed to the patient leads to the desired understanding on his part. The function of the patient is to encode, and that of the interviewer to decode the meaning of the message. The way the patient encodes a certain symbol of the message depends not only upon this one symbol but also upon previous symbols of the message and the way they have been encoded.

"Information, we must steadily remember," Weaver writes, "is a measure of one's freedom of choice in selecting a message. The greater his freedom of choice, the greater is the uncertainty that the message actually selected is some particular one. Thus greater freedom of choice, greater uncertainty and greater information all go hand in hand.

It will always be true that after the signal is received there remains some undesirable uncertainty about what the message was.

Error and confusion arise and fidelity decreases when, no matter how good the coding, one tries to crowd too much over a channel. A general theory at all levels will surely have to take into account not only the capacity of the channel but also (even the words are right!) the capacity of the patient's intellect."

When one talks to a patient, the brain is both the source of information and the destination; the vocal system of the

interviewer is the transmitter, and the ear of the patient is the receiver.

Applied to a communication system "the questions to be studied have to do with the amount of information, the capacity of the communication channel and the coding process that may be used to change a message into a signal."

"Information is a measure of the freedom of choice when one selects a message. If one is confronted with a very elementary situation where one has to choose one of two alternative messages, then it is arbitrarily said that the information associated with this situation is unity. The concept of information applies not to the individual messages, as the concept of meaning would, but rather to the situation as a whole, the unit information indicating that in this situation one has an amount of freedom of choice, in selecting a message, which it is convenient to regard as a standard or unit amount.

Thus one can pick out one word after another, these individually selected words then adding up to the message.

Obviously probability plays a major role in the generation of the message, and the choices of the successive symbols depend upon the preceding choices."

*Shannon* (2) has shown that when letters or words chosen at random are set down in a sequence dictated by probability considerations alone, they tend to arrange themselves into meaningful words and phrases.

This arrangement is predetermined by the constituents of the word as signal and by the unconscious symbolic meaning of the word. Words are voiced in order to establish contact with objects. The components of these signals stem from the use of sense perceptions and are different in their values. For some the sound is the main factor in approaching the object or bringing it nearer: it may be a substitute for the expression of love, or it may replace aggressive tendencies. It belongs then to a lower level of communication, which was once only a noise. For others it serves as an act

of motility, particularly in using the movement of the tongue as a displaced and regressive instinctual gratification. A third factor is the sense perception of touch, which finds its gratification by breathing the air against the object. These unconscious elements can at one time be a provocative factor for verbal productivity. They are often related to the sense of smell, which, if unconsciously chosen by the ego as a compromise with instinctual anal demands, may lead to logorhoea as well as to reticence. This concept of the word as a signal explains how certain words which seem insignificant, but which appear repeatedly, can be used as cue words for uncovering the instinctual pattern of interviewed persons.

An interview is therefore not only a verbal but also a preverbal communication between two persons, in which the interviewer controls and selects his tools — words and attitudes — for penetrating and piercing the consciousness, i.e., the chain of associations of the interviewed person. By this process increasingly more fragmentations and abstractions of the total content evolve. The purpose of the interview is to destroy or to dissolve the total content of information into its abstractions, in other words, to follow them up into the infantile past, where they originated and where they substituted for and became fused with concretistic object-related sensory perceptions.

All sensory perceptions were once objectless. A sound was only a noise from nowhere, a sensation of light was once only a change of darkness, a smell was originally only a sensory sensation different from odorlessness, a touch only a signal for reflectory motility adaptation. Much later they became signals to turn or withdraw from objects, or were used to regain them, when they were lost or to fuse them with imagined or symbolized objects. They became the means for the awareness of the inner and outer world and of the so-called reality. They were called upon either to absorb, by means of their specific faculties (smelling, seeing, hearing), the objects when they become approachable, to incorporate them figuratively speaking, and to keep the out-

side world in continual contact with the body. The opposite task assigned to sense perceptions by the growing ego is to repel and exclude the objects from the bodily union by disgust, antipathy, moving away or shutting off their perceptive faculties in relation to objects. The abstract image of the world becomes separated from the object-related one and either one may overgrow the other. In the words of Jean Paul Sartre "Without a smell or a shadow, without a past, nothing more than an invisible uprooting from the self towards the future . . . no more than a disembodied vision remains."

The art of interviewing consists of leading the interviewed person, in the transference situation, back into his childhood where object-related thinking still prevailed, and from there into the earlier period of magic, symbolic, objectless impressions. The information about his problems and symptoms which a patient gives us is a mixture of these primary and secondary processes. We have to isolate them, we have to provoke the elementary, the primary expressions of the past for an understanding of the problems of the present. Before they can be expressed verbally, they will always appear in sensory sensations, the more so as the interviewed person drifts to lower and lower levels of expression, simulating the ways of the child within the grown-up, which has retained its infantile modes of expression.

"What is true of verbal languages is also true for any other sensory "language", f.i. the visual languages." *Kepes* (3). "We match the data from the flux of visual experience with image-cliches, with stereotypes of one kind or another, according to the way we have been taught to see. And having matched the data of experience with our abstractions, visual, auditory, or verbal, we manipulate those abstractions with or without further reference to the data and make a system with them. But like other instruments, languages select, and in selecting what they select, they leave out, what they do not select. In that lies the diffi-

culty to understand these "languages." We hear words in verbal coherency, primarily because of the temporal proximity of their sound elements. We read words as segregated wholes, because their letters are closer to one another than are the last and the first letter of two words. Generally speaking, the relatively closest distance between sensory units offers the least resistance to their interconnections and thus makes possible the crystalization into a stable form." There is an intercorrelation, an interpenetration, a common structural basis of all kinds of sensory languages.

"Music, theoretically considered, consists altogether of lines of tone. It more nearly resembles a picture or an architectural drawing than any other art creation; the difference being that in a drawing the lines are visible and constant, while in music they are audible and in motion. The separate tones are the points through which the lines are drawn. (P. Goetschius, *Elementary Counterpoint*). Of course, a melody is only primarily linear and the comparison with a curved line applies only to the most obvious external aspect of a chain of tones." *Hindemith* (4). However, we have a faculty of perceiving structural qualities common in sight, hearing, touch and taste. The faculty of perceiving bright and dark, f.i., is a function common to the fields of senses. *Hornbostel's* (5) triangle experiment proved it: To match a particular smell a *bright grey* is chosen on a *color disc*. For the same smell a corresponding *bright tone* is chosen from a series of *tuning forks*. Interestingly enough, a subject chooses the same *bright grey* when auditorily stimulated by the bright tone of the tuning fork as he had chosen in reaction to the smell. Sharp skin stimuli f. i. have a bright effect, blunt ones a dark; cold has a bright effect, warmth a dark; a sharp pain is bright, a dull pain is dark. In brief; There exist "inter-modal" relations between the different senses and the stimulation of one of them — real or imaginery — encompasses the whole organism in all its parts as a fundamental biological process. *Boernstein* (6).

Equally the quality of the sounds of the interviewer's voice must unconsciously stimulate the whole organism of the interviewed person and must lead to the need of sensory expression. The same must be true for the sensation of the odor or of the color or the figure of the interviewer. He becomes a part of the sensory world around the person. This world is a mixture of the true and the imagined world, of an adult and a primitive world.

How can this be expressed in the interview?

A young male patient, married and the father of two little children, who was of superior intelligence but with strong passive personality traits, complains in analysis about losing himself in day dreams and having spells of fogginess. He drifts in the course of the interview into the past, talks about his childhood, his passive relationship to his father and younger brother and his competitiveness with his mother. He elaborates on his concepts of a happy family life, rubs his eyes, remarks that his vision is somewhat blurred, a condition familiar to him, in which he sees the surroundings in an ornamental fashion. After a pause he continues to talk further about the ideal family and develops his "geometric concept of civilization", as he calls it. This abstraction is in the shape of an ice cream cone; the apex represents the father, with his influence on the oval base which represents the mother with the children inside the cone full of ice cream. That is, in his visual image, the highest form of civilization which could be achieved, where everybody would have enough to eat, where the food would be supplied liberally to all the people. In this abstract futurama of the child's vision, the father is almost excluded from the abundance. This vision awakens new memories of his feelings towards the parental figures, his oral envy against both of them and his need of taking refuge in visual reveries.

Transitory visual images of abstract nature appear not infrequently during an interview, but are either suppressed and not verbalized to the interviewer or not recognized and



understood in their importance by him. They resemble in many respects the drawings and paintings of modern abstract painters which so often puzzle the onlooker. Those visual impressions which escape the attention of the interviewer appear not only as configurational ones, as in cubes and squares, circles and lines, but are more often expressed either in objectless color images or in significant object relations. That reminds me of what I read in an essay in the program of the filmed opera "The Tales of Hoffman" by Offenbach, where the designer *Hein Heckroth* writes under the title "The Truth about the Film" that he is "a stubborn believer in 'Alive Art'", which is a much better term than 'Modern Art' another word for 'Abstract Art', in which the realism is reduced to objectless sense perception. He points out that the action of 'Olympia the Doll' does not take place in his set of Paris, as the program reads, but in 'Yellow' and that there are other colors to play against the yellow. Likewise the action in Venice is for him not in Venice but in 'Red' which is tuned up with some black and gold. And the scene in the Greek Island means in his language "Grey and Blue," which goes well with the music. At the end he makes himself humorously clear by saying "if somebody insists on Realism in this film I must point out that the sausages in the Prologue and Epilogue are real sausages."

Another example of how visual objectless concepts rooted in the visual abstractions of early childhood can have a bearing on the development of a personality is the content of an interview with a well-educated young man. In this interview the patient dwelt on his hostile relationship towards his mother, an ambitious, domineering woman, to whose expectations he could never live up. Being an excellent pupil in school, he always failed when it came to mathematics. Even simple arithmetic problems were too difficult for him. He became anxious even before he knew what the problem was. This brought to his mind his curiosity as a child about the forms and configurations of human bodies and of animals and his discovery that they look like com-



binations of circles and lines; these in turn were similar to the circles and lines which he used as a small child in drawing figures, including those of his father and mother. That reminded him how he was once caught by his mother when he and a girl exposed themselves to each other. From then on he never drew any more. The sight of numbers made him anxious. He saw in "zero" a head, in "three" breasts and another part of the body, in the figure "one" a leg, and in combinations of those figures tabooed objects. The unsatisfied curiosity of his childhood led to a personality trait in which he preferred to leave things vague and relied on guesses and intuition.

In another case the visual "number" personification led to a mathematical phobia with an auditory inhibition.

A young man, whose father played the piano by ear while his mother had studied harmony systematically, or rather mathematically, was also musically gifted from his earliest childhood. But he developed almost a phobia for mathematics and figures, which represented to him object images, particularly images of parental figures and their relationship to each other. When in the course of his musical education "mathematics" was applied as a part of theory of harmony, he found it objectionable, became disinterested and gave up. He rationalized: "They were teaching music through mathematics. You'd learn one phase of the music, and you'd read another book and it would contradict what you just learned. The regular music that you get in harmony they turn into mathematics and dissonances. In normal harmony the highest chord that you have is the 9th and that becomes slightly dissonant to the ear. The highest chord Stravinsky is using is 13. He started putting scales to mathematics. It contradicted the original system of harmony and the average person who didn't have an extremely good ear couldn't listen. It was too dissonant for them to hear, so I decided I'd better stop studying it, that it wasn't worthwhile — no telling where it was going to end."

My mother can read music very well. She doesn't have too good an ear for music. She has a better knowledge of what is what in music. My father has a better ear, but doesn't know one note from another. He learned from listening. They play together. Mother sets the tempo and he follows. That's the way it goes at home."

This pattern of parental relationship found its repercussion in the personality development of the patient, with phobic inhibitory traits.

Thus we see that the picture of the world which everybody builds up in the course of his life can be reduced or broken down to simple components closely connected with sensory impressions of childhood which have remained alive in disguise.

Once I used this knowledge to the advantage of people who could not adjust themselves to the environment or the world as they saw it and who reacted with anxiety symptoms and vasomotor symptom. *Deutsch* (7). I tried to give them literally the opportunity to see the world in another light. I exchanged in one room the white light bulbs with red ones and substituted glass of the same color for the windows. Everything in the room and outside appeared in a red light. The same was done in another room with green bulbs and green windows.

One male person placed in the room with red light and having been left there alone for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour said immediately afterwards that the red light created at once a pleasant soothing impression. He was reminded of the sunset and the evening glow, of walks in the evenings with his friends and outings he made with them. After a while he felt warm all over his body, which was very pleasant.

Another person had the impression of the glow of fire and of burning houses and recalled memories of exciting fires in the childhood. Later he remembered fairy tales told by his mother and trips in a train through a grotto; finally

the love scene from "The Tales of Hoffman" came to his mind.

The red light did not always create a pleasant impression. In some persons it increased the anxiousness, making them feel unreal and stirring up disturbing fantasies.

More alarming were reactions to the *green* light exposure in some persons. One was found in the room in a severe state of anxiety, trembling and covered with perspiration. He felt as if somebody were about to choke him, and he was glad to leave the room. Another had the impression of evening dusk; memories of thunderstorms, of boat rides in stormy weather appeared until he finally reacted with all signs of seasickness, nausea and vomiting. Of course, there were those who relived in the green light very pleasant memories, such as walks with father or mother in the woods, in meadows and in green pastures. One experienced not only a soothing influence on his eyes but on his whole body with a feeling of unreality, became sleepy and drifted into reveries.

By and large, visual perception of objectless color leads to sensations in which concrete and abstract qualities are combined, in a revival of early emotional experiences. The colored impression of the environment lifts the person out of the reality. He feels depersonalized, as if he were transferred to a pictorial world resembling the environment of the past, which he has left behind, but which he has always carried within himself. As long as the color impression is effective the person finds himself transferred to a world which is more pleasing than the reality. The idea came to mind that therapeutic use might be made of this impression by supplying persons, according to their patterns of reaction, with red or green spectacles which helped them to escape into a world of unreality, away from the conflicts of the reality. It was not surprising that this simple method had in many persons with neurotic anxiety a soothing and comforting effect; for from the perception of this sensory pat-

tern we can move easily into the emotional and intellectual realms of a lower level and can create our own artistic illusion.

In returning to the topic expressed in the title "The Art of Interviewing and Abstract Art", we should be aware that in the interview with a patient we induce him to give up gradually some of his adult ego control, when we ask him to give us information about his past life or early childhood. The world of childhood is that of an illusion, formed by much simpler elements. The art of interviewing is closely related to the work of the modern artist, who forms, reforms and transforms the world of reality into more elementary primitive abstract forms. The interviewer resembles the abstract artist.

One of the leading abstract painters, the late *Mondrian*, (8) wrote that he had always the notion of destroying in order to rebuild, of breaking old molds, of freeing oneself from inherited formulas. He thought that the destructive element is too much neglected in art. He was never satisfied with his abstractions. Space had to be destroyed. Then he came to destroy the plane also; this he did by means of lines cutting the planes. But still the plane remained too much intact. Thus he reduced his work only to lines and brought color into those. Finally he tried to destroy these lines through mutual opposition.— We sometimes hear these same ideas expressed by patients during the analytic session.— But what he created was no longer objectively recognizable. "*Sartre*", the existentialist, might have called it "Consciousness without ego." It is painting without a theme. That is by definition abstract art: "It is characterized by little or no reference to the appearance of objects in nature." *Hess* (9). The free associative interview also has the aim of enabling the patient to submerge to the level of his early abstractions. *Deutsch* (10). The difficulty will always lie in understanding them. The abstract artist ex-

pects that the onlooker can do it. We can, as long as we understand the process of his creation.

One of the leading futurists, *MacDonald-Wright*, (11) tries to explain the process in the following words: "Since plastic form is the basis of all enduring art, and since the creation of intense form is impossible with color, I first determined, by years of color experimentation, the relative spatial relation of the entire color gamut. *By placing pure colors on recognizable forms*, (that is, by placing advancing colors on advancing objects, and retreating colors on retreating objects), *I found that such colors destroyed the sense of readiness, and were in turn destroyed by the illustrative contour*. Thus, I came to the conclusion that *color*, in order to function significantly, must be used as an *abstract medium*. Otherwise the picture appeared to me merely as a slight, lyrical decoration.

Simultaneously my inspiration to create came from a visualization of abstract forces interpreted, through color-juxtapositions, into terms of the visual. In them was always a goal of finality which perfectly accorded with my felt need in picture construction.

By the above one can see that *I strive to make my art bear the same relation to painting that polyphony bears to music. Illustrative music is a thing of the past: it has become abstract and purely aesthetic, dependent for its effect upon rhythm and form*. Painting, certainly, need not lag behind music."

In a similar way it was expressed by another painter, *Morgan-Russel* (11). "Personally, I believe that non-illustrative painting is the purest manner of esthetic expression, and that, provided the basic demands of great composition are adhered to, the emotional effect will be even more intense than if there were present the obstacle of representation. Color is form; and in my attainment of abstract form

I use those colors, which optically correspond to the spatial extension of the forms desired."

It is known that simple basic forms can be used to unravel the concepts of the visual world seen with the inner eye and to understand their representation.

Children who are born blind are suitable objects for proving this. *Deutsch* (12). To test their sense of reality these children were asked to play with blocks in the shape of cylinders, cubes, spheres, pyramids, oblongs, triangles and cups. For the infant who plays with them they suffice as basis both for his real world and the imagined world into which he becomes allured. The cylinder may become a man or father, the pyramid, a girl who wants to have what a boy has, the cup the mother, where the child feels sheltered in the cube, i.e., the house with the roof i.e. triangle. The oblong will become the bed where the family sleeps. The wooden objects turn through exuberant fantasies into a living world, from which even these wooden blocks disappear as a reality and become anthropomorphized. These children fuse the reality perceived by their intact senses with the psychic reality seen with their inner eye, coloring and distorting the sense perception of the world as it suits their needs. The child also lives in such a confused world with its abstract representations. It is the child's world which the interviewer tries to uncover in the interview.

In this respect the child resembles the abstract artist who closes his eye to the conventional reality and blots out its accepted representations. "The rationalist intellectual rebels of the 19th century projected into the 20th century the impulse toward the abstract analysis of static inanimate forms. That led to the different abstract art movements of the 20th century, like Cubism, Futurism, Orphism, Suprematism, Constructionism, Neo-Plasticism, Expressionism, Dadaism and Surrealism. It consisted mainly in a process of analytical abstractism of several planes of an object to present a synthetic simultaneous view of it. Later these

artists became inspired by the dynamism of the machine, which they proceeded to glorify. By way of emulation they attempted to paint movement by indicating abstract lines of force and schematic stages in the progress of a moving image."

From this point of view we have to look to some pictures of Chagall, to those of Klee, Duchamp, Russolo, Man Ray, Weber, Feininger, the Picasso of the early Twenties and some modern American abstract artists.

These pictures of abstract art represent images of a reality destroyed and dissolved into almost unrecognizable units, into the world of abstractions. By comparison the artistic interviewer is the sorcerer who unveils the abstract world of the patient in the interview. But he does not stop here. Here he differs from the abstract artist. He has to integrate it into the reality, into consciousness, to show the patient new interrelations between his abstract world of thoughts and the reality. That is his social task. Modern neo-realistic art in some countries is already concerned with social problems. Those artists paint under the stimulus of a social and political world. They are in search for reality rather than naturalism. They make no attempt to elude the use of recognizable objects. They create without losing their sense of reality, or rather their way back into reality. The interview with a patient passes through subterranean pathways into the atomistic objectless underworld. But the interviewer has to remain and the patient has to become the observer of this adventure.

It is the trend of modern time to see the world as a structure of energies and matter in itself only as a convenient but arbitrary image of our senses. Long before the advent of the atomic or hydrogen bomb modern physics, modern art and psychoanalysis all have paved the way for metaphysical thinking. The familiarity with those concepts is indispensable for the modern art of interviewing.

The art of interviewing and far more so of therapeutic



interviews consists in destructuralizing and derealizing the representations of the object world of the patient with the goal of synthesizing these again into a new form. In this procedure the interviewer meets the exhibition of abstract art in the mind of the patient and learns how the pictures came into being, beginning with objectless sense perceptions which gradually became objectified.

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# The Personal History of David Copperfield

*A Study In Psychoanalytic Criticism*

by  
Leonard F. Manheim

In honor of the centenary of  
the publication of Dickens'  
David Copperfield

**F**ROM May, 1849, to November, 1850, there appeared the monthly installments of the novel by Dickens which has always been accounted the most autobiographical of all his works. It followed closely upon that period of five years during which Dickens had been creating the canon of English Christmas mythology from *A Christmas Carol* through *The Cricket on the Hearth* to the final and little known allegory of memory known as *The Haunted Man*. Its immediate predecessor among the novels—*Dombey and Son*—marked the beginning of a period in Dickens' career as a novelist during which he attempted to make a fierce effort at self-analysis, a determined effort to come to grips with those figures of fact and fantasy which had plagued his conscious and unconscious psyche. In *Dombey* he had tried to exorcise the demon of the primitive father-fear through an attempt to penetrate with sympathy into a three-dimensional "father". Further, he had tried to picture, sympathetically as well, a woman who was no longer virginal but who was neither a freakish maternal image nor a crabbed spinster. He was to try something of the

same sort once more when he identified himself with the virgin-image herself in Esther Summerson of the next ensuing novel, *Bleak House*.

In *David Copperfield* the subject for analysis was none other than the author himself—the author, however, in the guise of the mythological hero. Dickens could not and did not succeed in any of these attempted self-analyses, not even in this, one of his most popular works for a full century. That the attempted confession did bring with it a temporary feeling that the load had been lifted through partial katharsis there can be no doubt. There is a certain freeness, an exuberance that runs through *David Copperfield* such as we have not experienced since the days of Mr. Pickwick. And yet it is a queer sort of confession, is it not, in which every element of “truth” is shot through and through with fantasy, derisive fantasy which is quite as revelatory as is the “confession” itself.

“Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anyone else, these pages must show.” With these words Charles Dickens opens one of the most famous *Bildungsromanen* in literature. And if David is *not* the hero of his own life, it is not because Charles Dickens did not do his utmost to make him so. There are indeed many points of factual similarity between the two “lives”. David must have been born during the early years of the nineteenth century and so must have been about Dickens’ own age when he was writing his autobiography. He shares his procreator’s initials, in reverse order, a fact which is said to have caused the author some surprise when it was called to his attention. His boyhood reading corresponds closely to that of his progenitor. He attends a bad school with a title not dissimilar to Wellington House; he works as an adolescent under conditions which he considers degrading; he becomes familiar with the law by working in a law office; he learns shorthand and earns his living by reporting parliamentary debates; he uses his newspaper connections to further his ambition to

become a writer, and he does become a writer of successful novels and travels on the continent. But there the similarities end. There is not even a hint that the autobiography of the hero is destined to become one of Copperfield's own novels. He insists that "this manuscript is intended for no eyes but mine" and that during his stay in Switzerland (after Dora's death and before he returned to England to marry Agnes) he "wrote a story, with a purpose growing, not remotely, out of his experience, and sent it to Traddles, who arranged for its publication very advantageously." Neither David Copperfield nor Charles Dickens is willing to publish his own life-history without fictional decoration!

At the very opening of the book the pattern is made plain. The hero will follow the pattern of the HERO (in Rank's analysis of the mythology-pattern). (1) "I was born with a caul," he writes and makes much of the superstitions connected with the relic of such a birth. If the obstetrical connotations of that statement are not plain, let us note that it means that the sac, containing the amniotic fluid in which the foetus lived in its prenatal state, has not burst before delivery, but that it is delivered intact with the infant in it. In the language of the myth, the HERO is not "drawn from the waters" one second earlier than is absolutely necessary, that he brings the "waters" into the world with him and is then "born" again by being released from his pre-natal state while he is, paradoxically, already "in the world." (The very superstition connected with the caul indicates its mythological nature; it is supposed to ensure its owner against *drowning*.) His belated exodus from the world of pre-natal omnipotence is followed immediately by other variants on the hero-myth. Once again, the hero is fatherless. In fact, he is fatherless from the moment of his birth, being a post-humous child. In fantasy, he is motherless as well, for Dickens does not miss a single opportunity to point out that Clara Copperfield is a girl-wife, a "mere baby", a virginal figure that at least equals any of the other similar figures with which the earlier works were blighted. If ever there was a virgin

birth depicted outside of theological literature, this is it. The pattern is reminiscent of *Oliver Twist*, even though David manages to transcend that former juvenile hero's vapidty. As with Oliver, the father-surrogates and later mother-images crowd in thick and fast. Some have a basis in childhood reminiscence; others in childhood fantasy.

The analytical tendency which arose in *Dombey and Son* makes the father-and-son situation in *David Copperfield* far more explicit. John Dickens, the "villain" who would subject his son to the indignity of factory work, is David's stepfather, Mr. Murdstone. Dickens does not wish the reader to miss for one second the implication of the first syllable of his name, for Betsey Trotwood refers to him and his sister as "murdering" villains. "Father" Murdstone, even after the death of David's mother, continues his practice of oppressing and intimidating young and inexperienced wives. Late in the tale, when David renews his old acquaintanceship with Mr. Chillip, the kindly physician who ushered him into the world, the latter points out "that Mr. Murdstone sets up an image of himself, and calls it the Divine Nature." Thus the Omnipotence-fantasy is associated with the ugly father-image.

In David's early youth he is haunted by the double vision of the virginal mother-image in the delicate Clara, existing side by side with the later oppressor-mother in Jane Murdstone. Jane returns to haunt him with a similar vision when she assumes the position of Dora's "confidential friend." The living image of the virgin-mother disappears, however, when David beholds her for the last time on his return to Salem House, but he sees her afterward "in [his] sleep at school—a silent presence near my bed—looking at me with the same intent face—holding up her baby in her arms."

It is not only the nineteenth century but all modern civilization which permits an author to pillory the father-image in the guise of a wicked stepfather. It is but a step further to extend the father-image to other father-surrogates. John Dickens in his guise as improvident father, over-flowery speaker and writer, pretentious pseudo-gentleman, is none

other than Wilkins Micawber, Esq., as all the world knows by this time. The picture is no more flattering than is that of Murdstone. I wonder how many readers today are willing to read every word of the flowery utterances, oral and in writing, which flow from Mr. Micawber's lips and pen. Dickens hardly expected them to do so, for in every case in which Mr. Micawber reveals some fact of importance to the course of the plot, that fact is revealed again in simplified form by the author himself. Mr. Micawber is a sweet, lovable old bore of a psychopathic personality. Mrs. Micawber is equally prosy, pretentious, and in addition guilty of the over-protestation that "she will never desert Mr. Micawber", although, as that worthy gentleman points out, no one had ever asked her to do so. The Micawber-Dickens family link, if not sufficiently stressed by the imprisonment for debt (in the King's Bench prison, let it be noted—the Marshalsea will not crop up again until *Little Dorrit*), is riveted more securely by references to David's pawning of the household equipment piece by piece so that the lordly gentleman and his lady may not have to appear in the pawn-shop, by the stress on the pawning of the few pathetic books (not David's books, though), and by Mrs. Micawber's announcement to the world by means of an elegantly-lettered placard (a placard that will appear again in *Our Mutual Friend*) that she is conducting a seminary for young females to which, unfortunately, no young females ever repaired for the improvement of their education.

What is generally overlooked by the Dickens-lovers who revel in the glorious nonsense of the lovable Micawber is the fact that Micawber is not only a pretentious fool but also, with regard to his own numerous and constantly increasing family, a very bad father. To David he was not so, of course, for David came to him during a period of emancipation from parental restraint and so, in his own new-found self-reliance, could afford to be genially tolerant of Micawber's characteristic imprudence and ambivalence toward Miss Emma, Master Wilkins, the twins, and the new angelic visitor in their midst. Yet even Master Wilkins shares in some of the analytic con-

fession, for does not Mr. Micawber (as John Dickens had done in Charles's youth) comment upon his son's beautiful "head-voice" and extend to him, at a family party which bores the young man to the point of distraction, the option of either going to bed or of favoring the company with a tasteful rendition of "The Woodpecker Tapping"?

But the list of father-surrogates, so far depicted both consciously and unconsciously, does not end with the step-father and the foster-father. Passing over such obvious extensions as the bad schoolmaster, Mr. Creakle, and his "good" prototype, Dr. Strong, as well as the Murdstone and Grinby figures, Mr. Quinion and Mick Walker (Bob Fagin—note the name—of Dickens' blacking-factory days), we find three other characters in this category on whom some comment, more speculative, to be sure, but none the less revealing, should be made.

We know how important is the role of verbal similarities both in psychoanalytic technique and in Dickens' name-giving. Is it not remarkable that Mr. Richard Babley, the harmless old lunatic who is under the protection of that remarkable mother-image, Miss Trotwood, is always referred to as MR. DICK? Here is the father's whipping-boy, condignly punished by being transformed into an impotent *babbler*!

The clinical picture of Mr. Dick holds together very well. David makes an immediate diagnosis of his condition.

Mr. Dick . . . was gray-headed and florid: I should have said all about him in saying so, had not his head been curiously bowed—not by age; it reminded me of one of Mr. Creakle's boys' heads after a beating—and his grey eyes, prominent and large, with a strange kind of watery brightness in them that made me, in combination with his vacant manner, his submission to my aunt, and his childish delight when she praised him, suspect him of being a little mad; though, if he were, how he came to be there, puzzled me extremely. (Chapter XIII)

The symptomatology is revealed little by little. He has marked distractibility of attention; he has a phobia concerning the use



of his right name; his father and his family consider him a "natural" (the term is used with just a little of the old superstitious veneration). Then we come to the paranoid delusion concerning King Charles's head, coupled with the double orientation which causes him to comment upon the present date and the date of the martyr-king's execution and to wonder how the King's troubles could have gotten into *his* head. There is an interesting comment upon Betsey Trotwood's co-operation with Mr. Dick in his "occupational therapy", for the madman is depicted as being most skillful with his fingers, and Betsey encourages him in his manufacture of toys for the neighboring boys, even to the huge kites through which he demonstrates the "flight of ideas" by pinning documents to them as they fly into the air. It is at these times, as David comments, that he is most relaxed and free from his delusions—as if they were literally carried away from him. The weak point is, as usual, the nineteenth century etiology, for Mr. Dick is said to have fallen into his condition as the result of a fever which followed upon the unhappy experiences of a favorite sister. Miss Trotwood, who is resolved at all costs to avoid any acknowledgment of Mr. Dick's mental weakness, explains his references to King Charles's head as "his allegorical way of expressing it", saying that "he connects his illness with great disturbance and agitation, naturally, and that's the figure, or the simile, or whatever it's called, which he chooses to use." Miss Betsey seems to understand the relation between dereistic thinking in the poet and in the madman! The whole picture taken together would seem to fit a type of schizophrenia with paranoid trends. The picture is, as ever, weakened later when Mr. Dick recovers under the strain of Miss Trotwood's financial decline sufficiently to be able to do copying work just so long as he keeps his precious memorial close at hand in which to jot down any references to King Charles's head which may arise to distract him. He lives in lodgings near those occupied by David and his aunt, later near the home of David and his wife, and is even enlisted to play an assisting role in the unmasking of Heep. It is a queer

sort of recompense, but thoroughly characteristic of the unconscious function of the Super-Ego, which permits the writer to satisfy his awakened guilt feelings toward the father-figure by painting another version of this father-image in the role of the "reiner Thor."

Equally rewarding should be our examination of a "good" father-figure, that of Mr. Wickfield, lawyer of Canterbury, father of the "little lamb" Agnes, and employer and dupe of the designing Uriah. Dickens has stressed Wickfield's connection with his own analytical impulse by having Wickfield constantly on the alert for some single guiding motive which he endeavors to detect beneath the actions of each of those with whom he is thrown in contact. Unfortunately, he has no more notion of the true nature of that motive than has Charles Dickens; consequently his analyses always come to grief. Not so Wickfield's self-analysis, however. The Oedipus-situation reproduced in his relations with his daughter seems constantly to plague him. He recollects that his own adored wife died during the girl's infancy because of her inability to withstand the hatred she had had heaped upon her by her own father, or her own sense of guilt at having married one whom her father disliked (for what reason we do not know); and he fixes his love wholly upon that daughter. But that does not bring relief. He finds himself brooding over the effect his daughter's death would have upon him, on the effect his death would have upon his daughter, and this brooding upon death (what we would denominate the incomplete neutralization of the Thanatos-impulse) is so unendurable to him that he seeks refuge in a gentlemanly variety of alcoholism which only adds to his depression, in addition to bringing upon him a sort of alcoholic arthritis, and he falls a victim to the machinations of the villainous Heep. When Heep finally raises his foul eyes toward the lovely Agnes, Wickfield comprehends to a limited degree the meaning of love turned to disease.

'Oh, Trotwood, Trotwood!' exclaimed Mr. Wickfield, wringing his hands. 'What I have come to be, since I first saw you

in this house! I was on my downward way then, but the dreary, dreary road I have traversed since! Weak indulgence had ruined me. Indulgence in remembrance, and indulgence in forgetfulness. My natural grief for my child's mother turned to disease; my natural love for my child turned to disease. . . . I thought it possible that I could truly love one creature in the world, and not love the rest; I thought it possible that I could truly mourn for one creature gone out of the world, and not have some part in the grief of all who mourned. . . . I have preyed on my own morbid coward heart, and it has preyed on me.' (Chapter XXXIX)

Dickens thinks that he is preaching his usual message of the duty to be "good", to love one's neighbor; in only the tiniest step forward he would have realized the relationship of that sort of universal love to the psychoanalytic revelation of the "economy of love"—"not too little and not too much". Never again was he to come so close to that comprehension. Rarely is he as able to view a father-image with so great a degree of objectivity. Yet we must not fail to note that here again the father who failed to love wisely and truly is subjected to con-dign punishment, punishment from the hands of one whom he had treated as a son, lifting him up from poverty and lowliness, but only through an unworthy motive, and with inaccurate appraisal of that "son's" motivation.

The freedom which we note in the treatment of the father of one of the virgin-images is lacking in the corresponding figure of one who stands in the position of father to another. Daniel Peggotty loves Emily every bit as much as Wickfield loves Agnes, but his love is not selfish. On the contrary, it is selfless to an almost Christ-like degree. Yet when we come to examine the family circle of the Peggottys, we are impressed by the fact that nobody is related to anyone else more closely than as uncle, niece, or cousin! Yet the set-up is that of father, mother (Mrs. Gummidge), son (Ham), and daughter (Emily). If the Oedipus motive is given free reign, there is no social censor to prevent it, for there is no blood-relationship to cry halt. In Daniel Peggotty we have no at-

tempt at analysis of the father-figure, no attack upon the father as enemy, but the final idealization of what a father ought to be, uncontaminated by social position, unhampered by poverty or indolence, untrammelled by introversion, unhindered by anything which would prevent his being the kind of passionately loving and all-wise father for which the adolescent soul of the author yearned unceasingly.

When the HERO, in the words of Menninger's interpretation of the Rank formula (2) proclaims, "I eschew all women except madonnas, for whom I have only reverence, love and devotion," he is casting a large portion of woman-kind, both married and unwed, into outer darkness. They are for him the pattern of the "common earthly parent" whom he cannot recognize as his own virgin-progenitor. For Dickens they are all queer and odd in sundry ways, either as the faithless servant Mrs. Crupp, or as the dependent mother who cannot give up the daughter upon whom she relies (Mrs. Crewler, mother of Tommy Traddles' Sophy), or the conniving mother of Uriah Heep, or the vicious mother-in-law of Dr. Strong who has designs upon the virtue of her own daughter, or even unmarried mother-surrogates like the sisters of the late Mr. Spenlow. They are all caricatures of femininity, portrayed vividly enough, to be sure, but never wholly sympathetically. On the other hand, the "humble" mother-substitute who rescues the hero from the bad pseudo-parents (*Clara Peggotty*) and the regal doting mother who adopts and raises him to a kingly estate (*Betsey Trotwood*) are the recipients of compensatory traits, super-added to their necessary "queerness" to console the HERO for his "terrible wishes" and to make amends and do penance for his sins.

To vary the mythological figure, is not *Betsey* much like the fairy godmother (divorce the term from its present semantic significance and look at it in its literal meaning) who attends upon the birth of the hero in a fairy-story, then takes offense, disappears, and only returns after a long interval to grant him his "three wishes"? The pattern is even more

explicit in the case of the Spenlow aunts, who have what they consider a just cause of complaint for having been slighted at Dora's christening-feast and have remained on cool terms with the family until they take in the orphaned, destitute girl. With respect to Betsey, Dickens goes out of his way time and again to re-iterate that her rough and crotchety exterior hides a "heart of gold". She imputes all of her affection for David to what the dear child Clara would have felt had she been alive. In passing, is it not remarkable how Dickens puts all the blame for their misdeeds upon his "bad" characters? Assuming that which we cannot imagine, that Betsey ever really had a husband, is it not conceivable that his inability to live on peaceful terms with her might have been due in no slight measure to *her* peculiarities? Just so David, pictured as an angel-child, might possibly have appeared otherwise to a stepfather even less cruel than Mr. Murdstone.

Betsey Trotwood, for all of her denunciation of marriage and her mortal disappointment with David for not having been born a girl, is not lacking in affection for some portions of mankind. She certainly sings the praises of Mr. Dick as a man of unusual sagacity, even over and above the compensatory utterances designed to distract attention from his obvious mental weakness. She has a soft spot in her heart for Mr. Wickfield, for she keeps secret the mode by which she has been deprived of most of her small fortune when she believes that it is Wickfield rather than Heep who is responsible for its disappearance. Her whole pattern as fairy-godmother is rounded out when we discover that her later claim of poverty is exaggerated to "test" David lest his indolence and pride should ruin him, and that she has secreted a small but still substantial portion of her fortune throughout the whole time of David's struggle for financial independence.

David Copperfield, then, is a HERO in the mythological sense, but he is never a hero of a modern novel, never a Raskolnikov, nor a Hans Castorp, never a Julien Sorel nor a Daniel Deronda. And yet there can be no doubt that Dick-

ens in this novel was trying to penetrate into the mysteries of his leading character. The trouble was that he could find nothing there because he had placed nothing there, and he had placed nothing there because he could not do so without coming directly to grips with those portions of Charles Dickens that he would not and could not bear to meet. Far easier was it for him to permit the elements in his hero-figure to be once more spread out among a number of characters, to set off blacks against whites with a few pied colors thrown in, to create a galaxy of hero-caricatures instead of one complete hero. This is precisely what he has done. If we examine Uriah Heep we find that he is everything that David is not, with one single exception—he too reaches adolescence and maturity without the assistance of a father. Uriah has committed the fatal error of rejecting the “good” father-substitute, Mr. Wickfield, modelling himself exactly on his own “bad” father. Dickens pretends to scorn the British tradition of birth and station; yet the greatest element in Uriah’s hypocrisy is that he utilizes a pretended humility in his station in order to worm his way out of it and into the “upper classes”. Uriah is humble, whereas David is given to pride. But look at the fraud and conniving in Uriah’s humility. Uriah is awkward, ungainly, uncouth. Is it to be expected that David should not be proud of his good looks and his gentility when he sees what their opposite has produced in Uriah? David has his period of extravagance and disregard of money. But is not that better than to be so covetous of money that one becomes a usurer and an embezzler like Uriah? Uriah sets David’s teeth on edge at first sight. What else could one expect when Dr. Jekyll is confronted with Mr. Hyde? Yet the sum-total is, in David, an unconvincing puppet-like figure of no real vitality; in Uriah, the greatest figure of a hypocrite in all literature since Tartuffe. Note in passing that Dickens, with his craze for “compensatory” character-building has given Heep’s Christian name to the well-meaning Jewish hypocrite in *Our Mutual Friend*.

David, the mythological HERO, makes his series of de-



seents into the pit, only to be resurrected each time into a new and more lovely avatar. He struggles out of the darkness of Creakle's school, the gloom of his mother's death, and the hell of Murdstone and Grinby into the bright sunlight of Betsey Trotwood's affluence. Yet he once more follows the hero-pattern by seeking out the companion of the pit, the hero of his fallen days, his evil genius, James Steerforth. Here again there is a hero-dichotomy. Steerforth has all of the graces of living under his control to a far greater extent than has David. He possesses the *savoir faire*, the ability to make himself universally loved (by all except the good angel, Agnes, of course), the ability to get on in life with little or no effort. But at heart he is a black villain, for, to him, sex is not the holiest of holies that it is to David. He dallies with it lightly, too lightly, and all is lost. Yet, amazingly enough, David cannot recover from his adolescent infatuation for Steerforth even in the time of his greatest villainy. To David he is still one to be loved and admired despite his evil ways. Can it, oh, can it be that there is something fascinating about Steerforth's failure to apotheosize the glories of virginity, something that David-Dickens longs for, but can never hope to attain? Or is it conceivable that David sees in Steerforth a means of satisfying the cravings of Eros without the necessity of soiling *any* virgins? The temptation is great to speculate on these possibilities. The literary effect is, once more, to create a great, living character, marred only by the forced and obvious theatricality of his demise with Ham in the great storm at Yarmouth.

And, to balance the picture of David veering toward ruin in his first resurrection, we have the corresponding picture of his neglected and unappreciated schoolfellow, Tommy Traddles, during the period of David's emergence from the double shock of his aunt's financial debacle and his supposedly hopeless love for Dora. It is Tommy upon whom he leans in his need, Tommy who engineers the unmasking of Heep, Tommy who acts as his friend and confidential agent. Yet David does not love Tommy as he loved Steerforth. He finds

Tommy's unruly hair trying, Tommy's unfailing good nature something of a bore. He cannot forget that Tommy as a schoolboy received the largest number of beatings from Creakle and took them all cheerfully. Hence he feels that Tommy cannot be the "delicate child of life" that he, David, is; consequently he never identifies himself with him. Thus does David-Dickens excuse his own inability to rise above his oppressing emotions. He envisions Tommy's normal mental and social adjustment as a sort of special gift, rather than something to be attained by his own well-directed efforts. From his schooldays on, Tommy has always "doodled" by drawing skeletons, the reason for which David could not comprehend unless he could be viewed as "a sort of hermit, who reminded himself by these symbols of mortality that caning couldn't last forever."

The last and most shadowy in this galaxy of hero-pictures is Ham Peggotty. He is to heroes what Daniel Peggotty is to fathers, the great Christ-like ideal of humility, forbearance, forgiveness, native nobility, etc., etc., none of which brings him to life for a moment. Could he not see that his patient adoration and abject servitude of little Emily could not have other than a bad end? He had no Marcel Proust to tell him so. Neither did Dickens.

If we have seen in the father-figures, the mother-images, and the hero-portraits the dualism, the dichotomy that arises from an honest attempt at analysis and mental purging of the dregs of the Unconscious plus the successful attempts of the Psyche to preserve its cherished illusions and to exhibit them in their various fantastic guises, what are we to say of the same double picture which we observe in the author's dealings with the omnipresent virgin-image? The attempt at analysis and katharsis seems to be genuine, but oh, how feeble, for this cherished mirage is most firmly imbedded not only in the mind and "heart" of the author but in the *mores* of his times.

"Why is it," Dickens exclaimed in later life, "that as



with poor David, a sense comes always crushing on me now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness that I have missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made?" (3) If, as seems apparent, something of the same sort of anxiety was plaguing him even when he wrote *David Copperfield*, would it not seem an easy task to find out the source of the lost happiness, the identity of the one companion he has never been united with? Now who could that be in the light of his past history other than the pretty, flirtatious little jilt Maria Beadnell? No other feminine figure could ever have suggested itself, or have been permitted by the Super-Ego to suggest itself, to his consciousness. Had he not nursed his romantic, unrequited affection and would he not continue to do so even for the years following *David Copperfield* to such an extent that he would open Maria Beadnell Winter's letter to him years after "with the touch of his young friend David Copperfield when he was in love?" He would even write to Mrs. Winter, five years after he had supposedly routed "Dora's" image from his heart, "Whatever of fancy, romance, energy, passion, aspiration and determination belong to me, I have never separated and never shall separate from the hard-hearted little woman—You." (4) But it would be anticipation to run ahead to the shocking blow Dickens was to receive when his Dora re-appeared in the flesh. We have here to consider the attempt to rid himself of the *succubus* while it is still only a mind-image.

Good, then! Let the author imagine that his early courtship was a successful one. Let him think that, instead of the mischievous (perhaps jealous) interference of Miss Leigh, he had the kindly, gushing aid of Miss Julia Mills. Let him fancy that his courtship did not have to be placed in the power of the friendly but unimaginative Kolle, but that, when aid was needed, he would have the more intelligent, high-hearted assistance of Tommy Traddles. Then let fiction come to the aid of fact and deprive Maria of her unsympathetic and cruel parents by substituting for them a dead mother and a soon impoverished and deceased father for Dora. What

then is to stand in the way of the match? Nothing but a pair of queer maiden aunts, Dora's "Aunt Betseys", and they are soon disposed of.

Good again! David-Dickens is married to Dora-Beadnell. And what occurs at once? He finds that she acts like his image of Catherine Hogarth Dickens at her worst. She is no housekeeper. She cannot manage well. She is silly and romantic, and all this without even Catherine's excuse, a large family of young children. "How silly of me," thinks the author, "to imagine that I would have been happier with Dora. She would probably have turned out just like a real-life wife."

The rest is simple. "Off with her head!" Oh, of course, it is done with great pathos, with something of the genuine tragedy of parting with a cherished illusion, but there is no doubt that Dora, once disposed of as a wife, is better off dead, and that Dickens undoubtedly feels that it is a far, far better thing that he is doing than he has ever done. But when the unconscious aggression has vented itself upon the pathetic ashes of poor Dora, the author cannot face the fact that the image of which she is but a pale replica has not died, and, what is more, will not die. What he yearned for even consciously was the blissful days of the early courtship when he could feel "as to marriage, and fortune, and all that . . . almost as innocently undesigning . . . as when he loved little Em'ly." Dora's great misfortune was that, child-wife though she was, she was wife as well as child and the hideous fate loomed for her, as it had (less consciously) for little Nell, that she might some day become all-wife and no child at all. Just before her final illness, which seems to have followed upon a miscarriage, David has given up his half-hearted attempt to make an adult out of her. His thoughts mark the high point in the analytical process and require quotation at considerable length.

So ended my last attempt to make any change in Dora. I had been unhappy in trying it; I could not endure my own solitary wisdom; I could not reconcile it with her former

appeal to me as my child-wife. I resolved to do what I could, in a quiet way, to improve our proceedings myself; but I foresaw that my utmost would be very little, or I must degenerate into the spider again, and be forever lying in wait.

And the shadow I have mentioned, that was not to be between us any more, but was to rest wholly on my heart. How did that fall?

The old unhappy feeling pervaded my life. It was deepened, if it were changed at all; but it was as undefined as ever, and addressed me like a strain of sorrowful music faintly heard in the night. I loved my wife dearly, and I was happy; but the happiness I had vaguely anticipated, once, was not the happiness I enjoyed, and there was always something wanting.

In fulfillment of the compact I have made with myself, to reflect my mind on this paper, I again examine it, closely, and bring its secrets to the light. What I missed, I still regarded—I always regarded—as something that had been a dream of my youthful fancy; that was incapable of realization; that I was now discovering to be so, with some natural pain, as all men did. But that it would have been better for me if my wife could have helped me more, and shared the many thoughts in which I had no partner; and that this might have been; I knew.

Between these two irreconcilable conclusions; the one, that what I felt was general and unavoidable; the other, that it was particular to me, and might have been different: I balanced curiously, with no distinction of their opposition to each other.

Sometimes, the speculation came into my thoughts, What might have happened, if Dora and I had never known each other? But she was so incorporated with my existence, that it was the idlest of all fancies, and would soon rise out of my reach and sight, like gossamer floating in the air.

I always loved her. What I am describing, slumbered, and half awoke, and slept again, in the innermost recesses of my mind. There was no evidence of it in me; I know of no influence it had in anything I said or did. [sic] . . . .

"The first mistaken impulses of an undisciplined heart." These words of Mrs. Strong's were constantly recurring to me, at this time; were almost always present in my mind. I awoke with them, often, in the night; I remember to have even read them, in dreams, inscribed upon the walls of houses. For I knew, now, that my own heart was undisciplined when it first loved Dora; and that if it had been disciplined, it never

could have felt, when we were married, what it had felt in its secret experience.

'There can be no disparity in marriage, like unsuitability of mind and purpose.' These words I remembered too. I had endeavoured to adapt Dora to myself, and found it impracticable. It remained for me to adapt myself to Dora; to share with her what I could, and be happy; to bear on my shoulders what I must, and be still happy. This was the discipline to which I tried to bring my heart, when I began to think. (Chapter XLVIII)

If there is a continuous flow of ambiguity in this analysis; if it represents Dickens in a two-fold attitude toward the lost Dora and the unlosable Catherine, that is exactly what we must expect. Dickens cannot, unaided, penetrate any deeper. He cannot see that what he requires in a wife, she must, paradoxically, lose at the moment she becomes a wife! He sees what he has lost in Dora, but what he cannot see is the inexorable monotonous round in which he re-creates that same fantastic image, loses it in one way or another, and recreates it a moment later. How could we expect in nineteenth century Dickens even so much as an inkling of the suspicion that he must look for the source of his obsession, not to his eighteenth year, not even to his adolescence or childhood, but back to the very inception of the Oedipus-feeling in the various stages of infancy?

For, even apart from Dora, the novel is replete with child-wives. What is worse, they are constantly in the habit of growing up, losing their innocence in one way or another, and joining the despised class of "the other sort of woman". The fantasy of contamination from this "other sort" is particularly active throughout the work. Little Em'ly, taking pity on the prime prototype of the "fallen woman", Martha Endell, must see her and give her aid secretly, lest even that angelic guardian of her life, Daviel Peggotty, should learn of the contaminating experience. Ham Peggotty, the prototype of that Dickens who has found it possible to discuss in letters with Miss Burdett-Coutts the proper methods for the

guidance and reclamation of committed prostitutes, (5) allows the good deed, while he stands by protectively and offers his purse. Yet there is a clear hint that the experience has not been a good one for Little Em'ly, and Martha bitterly reproaches herself with having been an evil influence in Em'ly's life, and strives to atone for it by her solicitude for Emily's welfare on her miserable return to London. Little Em'ly, whom David has loved with the only sort of really "worth-while" love that Dickens could fully sympathize with, falls a victim to the secondary hero-prototype, Steerforth, and is lost forever,—or at least until, after her descent into the pit, she is born again in a new world (Australia) with her beloved "father", Daniel Peggotty, forswearing love and marriage this time forever.

The fear of contamination is widespread, for kindly Mr. Wickfield will not extend his indulgence to his beloved Agnes so far as to permit her to be seen with Annie Strong, when Annie is under suspicion of harboring extramartial affection for her cousin Jack Maldon. Good-hearted Minnie Joram cannot bear to see her tiny daughter even wear a ribbon that once belonged to Little Em'ly. And so on, and so forth. The only virgin-character who maintains her childhood charm, with added wisdom and beauty of womanhood is the shadowy and insubstantial dream-wife Agnes.

The Agnes—Annie connection is tenuous, perhaps, but profoundly illuminating. Before Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*, eight children had been born to him. Of these six were boys, two girls. Mary Dickens (always called Mamie in later life) had been born in 1838, the year after Mary Hogarth's death. The girl born in 1839 had been named Kate for her mother and Macready for Dickens' actor-friend. No other girl-child was born until the period of *David Copperfield*. A daughter born on August 15, 1850, when *Copperfield* was nearing the close of its serial publication (Dora Copperfield's death is reported in the forty-eighth chapter of a book which ran to sixty-four chapters) was named *Dora Annie*. The resurrection of "Dora" we can well understand; and the

reason for some double name is quite apparent, but why Annie? Is it possible that the author saw in Annie Strong the picture of an Oedipus-situation come true, one who gives up the love of one of her own generation in order to remain true to one whom she loves though he is old enough to be her father, whom she loves despite the opposition, trickery and scheming of her "unnatural" mother? Annie, then, is as far as life can go in producing an Agnes. The Agnes-image, the "little lamb", exists only in the world of dreams and unreality. It was, incidentally, the final cruel trick of fate that it was to be this child, among all Dickens' children, who was to die in infancy!

Nowhere in the novel does scorn and hatred for the fallen woman reach greater heights than in one of Dickens' most violently neurotic women, Rosa Dartle. Not that Dickens endorses Rosa's shrewish denunciations of Little Em'ly for one minute, even though, as we shall see in a moment, he (as author) might have prevented at least one of them. In Rosa, Dickens indicates that he is dealing with the ancient mechanism,

Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned,  
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.

Rosa is insanely jealous, jealous of Steerforth, toward whom her emotional reaction is markedly ambivalent. She yearns for the days when they were children together, even though it was during those days that Steerforth, in a fit of ungovernable temper, had disfigured her for life. She is bound by ties of mixed love and hatred to her nemesis and benefactor, Steerforth's mother. Steerforth, for whom Rosa herself is a mother-image, an elder-sister prototype, merely endures her existence, showing his unconscious aggression against her only in the inexcusable fact that he ignores her adoration. Rosa, who seems to have some traces of the second Mrs. Dombey about her (she, too, can play the harp beautifully when she is in a soft mood), is choked by the spleen of her own im-



potence. She finally finds an object to vent it on—Little Em'ly. She is not content with denouncing the "wayward" girl to David and even to Daniel Peggotty; she must ascertain when the wretched creature makes her forlorn return to London, pursue her there and then denounce her to her face. But how do we know all this? David is patiently waiting out in the hall while the cruel tongue spits venom at Steerforth's misguided little would-be lady. And he does not interrupt Rosa, for he fears to let Em'ly see anyone of her former acquaintances until Daniel Peggotty arrives, so that she may throw herself into his protecting arms. So David stands by, in ridiculous impotence, and Dickens has the satisfaction of a certain sort of secondary sadism at the expense of one who would trade her virginity for gold and position, even though she be one whom he had once loved! Nothing is left for Rosa but to return to the woman who stands for everything that is James Steerforth and who has yet seen fit to set herself up in opposition to the son who resembles her so closely, to denounce the mother of her beloved James in equally biting terms when the erring young man's death is reported; yet to remain with the older woman in her final drifting into senility and weakness. Rosa occupies a queer position within the Dickens categories of women. He should sympathize with her, but he doesn't; she should be admirable, but she isn't. The result is a most felicitous character-portrayal.

*David Copperfield* is Dickens' greatest *Bildungsroman*, his most titanic effort at self-revelation and self-analysis, balked and frustrated at every turn; yet emerging at times with a violent grasping at literary and artistic realism which is unequalled in his own works, unequalled in nineteenth century British fiction, and hardly bettered anywhere in the field of the novel. If the analytic impulse which created it was practically spent when it was being written, we cannot be too critical. How could we expect even so much from Dickens in the light of his own neurotic drives, in the light of the times

in which he lived, and especially in the light of a deliberate, conscious attitude which could allow him to write that he could never dream of his characters, since "it would be like a man dreaming of himself, which is clearly an impossibility. Things exterior to one's self must always be the basis of dreams"? (6) If he had known that it is impossible for one to dream of anything *but* one's self, then perhaps he would not have been Dickens. To a greater extent than others knew, perhaps to a greater extent than he knew himself, he was dreaming of himself when he wrote *David Copperfield* although it cannot be said in all honesty that he was *writing* about himself. There was no book which he wrote with which he was more loth to part. In the original preface to the book he protested that he could not "get sufficiently far away from it . . . to refer to it with composure which this formal heading of Preface would seem to require." In the preface to a later edition he continues in the same vein.

My interest in it was so . . . strong, and my mind was so divided between pleasure and regret—pleasure in the achievement of a long design, regret in the separation from many companions—that I was in danger of wearying the reader with personal confidences and private emotions.

Besides which, all that I could have said of the Story to any purpose, I had endeavoured to say in it.

It would concern the reader little, perhaps, to know how sorrowfully the pen is laid down at the close of a two-years imaginative task; or how an Author feels as if he were dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world, when a crowd of the creatures of his brain are going from him for ever. Yet, I had nothing else to tell; unless, indeed, I were to confess (which might be of less moment still), that no one can ever believe this Narrative in the reading more than I believed it in the writing.

So true are these avowals at the present day, that I can now only take the reader into one confidence more. Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like



many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is **David Copperfield**.

Many a favorite child has been far less worthy of the love lavished upon him by a fond parent.

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#### SOURCE-NOTES

1. Rank, Otto — *Der Mythos von der Geburt des Helden* — Leipzig, 1909
2. Karl Menninger — *The Human Mind* — New York (orig. ed. 1930) — Page 315. See also Rank, *op. cit.* — Page 67
3. Hugh Kingsmill (Lunn) — *The Sentimental Journey, a Life of Charles Dickens*. New York — 1935 — Page 170.
4. Walter Dexter (ed.) — *Letters to Maria Beadnell* — London — 1936 — P. 74
5. Dickens, in a letter to Miss Burdett-Coutts in 1846, commenting upon cases of recidivism among the former inmates of the "Home" wrote with some penetration, "This sudden dashing down of all the building up of months upon months, is, to my thinking, so distinctly a Disease with the persons under consideration that I would pay particular attention to it, and treat it with particular gentleness and anxiety." In the same year he wrote an appeal calling upon these women to enter the Home voluntarily; he made suggestions for the improvement of its conduct, even condemning the dullness of the uniforms provided, as late as 1856. (See *Letters to Baroness Burdett-Coutts* — London — 1931 — *passim*)
6. Beadnell Letters, *op. cit.*, P. 14



# Uncanniness, Yearning, and Franz Kafka's Works\*

by

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## I.

**I**T is surprising that of all the emotions which have been described as being evoked by the works of Franz Kafka the effect of the uncanny has been omitted; and yet it is this reaction that most clearly depicts the readers feelings. It is to substantiate this point and to shed light on the relationship between the feelings of uncanniness and yearning that this paper is directed.

In his paper, "The 'Uncanny' ", Freud concluded that "an uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed". The occurrence of the uncanny as it appears in real life is evoked mostly by the first named circumstance, while the uncanny in fiction is created by both means.

Freud shows, in his discussion of the uncanny, as it appears in literature, that one source of its production lies in the following development of a work. " . . . the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality. In this case he accepts all the conditions operating to produce uncanny feelings in real life; and everything that would have an uncanny effect in real life has it in his story. But in this case, too, he can increase his effect and multiply it far be-

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yond what could happen in reality by bringing about events which never or very rarely happen in fact. He takes advantage, as it were, of our surmounted superstitiousness; he deceives us into thinking that he is giving us the sober truth, and then after all oversteps the bounds of possibility. We react to his inventions as we should have reacted to real experiences; by the time we have seen through the trick it is already too late and the author has achieved his object . . .". The negative reaction that the reader has to this "deceit" can possibly be overcome, states Freud, in a definite manner. It is that the writer "should keep us in the dark for a long time about the precise nature of the conditions he has selected for the world he writes about, or that he should cunningly and ingeniously avoid any definite information on the point throughout the book".

There is not a better example of this than in Kafka's "The Trial" and "The Castle". In the former the reader never learns what Joseph K. is charged with, or whether he is guilty of the crime which is punished by a horrible death. In "The Castle" the information withheld is why K. so desperately wishes to confront Klammer, and why he yearns so to enter the castle.

We know that in both novels the Oedipal theme is a paramount one. Both deal with attempted propitiation of the higher authorities or father surrogates. (1) Also in both cases, the primal sin is committed long after the protagonist begins his attempts to obtain acquittal or forgiveness. Here is the main element of distortion, that the crime of incest takes place "in medias res" although existent in fantasy from the start. In addition, Joseph K. in "The Trial", and K. in "The Castle" are made to appear strangely passive in the seduction of the washerwoman and Leni and of Frieda

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1. In "The Trial" this is clearly indicated. In "The Castle" the theme appears less directly but still clearly and it is expressed in Frieda's words to K. "That you still went on trying to reach Klammer was a kind of feeble endeavour to propitiate him in some way".

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respectively. A third disguise takes the form of reversal and rationalization. The two K's explain that it is through these women that they hope to contact and appease the court and Klamm, whereas actually it is really their wish to possess the mother representatives that lead to the fruitless struggles with the omnipotent restrictive father. (2) Indeed, it is the tragic fate of K. that he is faced with the unalterable desire to fulfill the impossible, that he is masochistically driven to present his incestuous wishes to an unyielding superego, despite the doom of the inevitable failure and inevitable punishment.

It is this sharp stimulation of the unconscious Oedipal conflict, accomplished in so beautifully a silhouetted manner that the shadow of the reader's own repressed incestuous longings is almost but not quite focussed onto consciousness that produces the disturbing feelings of strange familiarity, uncanniness.

The second criteria that Freud gives, the reappearance of primitive beliefs as realistic and valid ones, is also characteristic of Kafka's works. This is clearly illustrated in the longer novels ("The Trial" and "The Castle") by the portrayal of human figures and institutions having supernatural characteristics or powers, such as Klamm's many forms, his omniscience through the assistants, the perfect memory of Barnabas, the omnipotence of the castle and court authorities, etc. In the short stories animistic thinking processes appear even more directly; life after death in "The Hunter Gracchus", animation of the inanimate in "The Bucket Rider" and "The Bridge", humanization of the inhuman in "A Sport", dehumanization of the human in "Metamorphosis", the dead returning to life in "The Mar-

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2. It is also true however, that the use of women as a means of placating the avenging father is a secondary theme in Kafka's novels. This is never successful since these "mothers" besides their underlying hostility towards the hero also, in the end, remain faithful to their masters, those against whom he struggles.
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ried Couple", and so on. In all of these cases in which confirmation of archaic ideas is to result in the production of the feeling of the uncanny another condition of Freud's is met. This is that the quality of uncanniness can only be retained "in fiction as in experience so long as the setting is one of physical reality". A reading of any of Kafka's writings provides immediate affirmation of this point.

In fact, it is because of the realistic staging that these intrapsychic dramas of Kafka result in such intense effects on the audience. Thus, while unconsciously understanding and supporting K. in his attempts to reach Klamm and arrive at the castle, and in battling the court at the side of Joseph K., the onlooker feels the strangeness of his situation. After all, his intellect dictates, Joseph K. could call a policeman and put an end to the nonsense of the mock court, and K. could enjoy himself in the village until the castle authorities attempted to oust him, etc. But these lines of thought are pedantic even to the most literal mind. No one fails to recognize that the real reality in these two great books is a psychic one, and it is here that Kafka succeeds so resoundingly. No author has more readily illustrated Freud's observation that the effect of uncanniness is "often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes. . . ."

Contributing to the uncanny effect, Jentsch states, are "doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate". (3, 4) Related to this is the uncanny ef-

3. Freud does not fully accept this view. It becomes evident though, in his discussion of the uncanny effect of the first act of "Tales of Hoffman" that the elements brought up by Jentsch do play a role in creating the uncanny feeling even if the return of infantile complexes (the Oedipal situation) is paramount.
4. One cannot help being fascinated by the self-protective instinct of certain animals (such as the opossum) which pretend to be dead to avoid enemy attack. Here both of Jentsch's factors are working

fect of mental illness for this arouses in the viewer "the feeling that automatic mechanical processes are at work concealed beneath the ordinary appearance of animation". Just such a situation is found in "The Castle" as seen in the workings of the assistants. These creatures, for this is what they must be called, behaving part human, part robot, part child, part adult, are, as Frieda calls them, messengers of Klamm. But even more precisely they seem to be moved by some ulterior force and can be viewed as puppets, distantly and secretly manipulated by this esoteric authority. Of all the characters in "The Castle" these create most of all a peculiar incomprehensible image in what they themselves constantly protest is reasonable action.

We may speculate that the assistants also may be interpreted as direct extensions or re-duplications of Klamm. They appear in but two of the varying forms he takes, assuring him of indestructibility while permitting him close and continuous observation of K. This " . . . doubling, dividing, and interchanging the self" states Freud, is a way of "insuring against the destruction of the ego" and when utilized as a technical device helps to elicit a feeling of uncanniness. In "The Castle" K's hostility towards Klamm is hidden. While treating the name of this almighty father figure with utmost respect he freely directs his hatred and aggression toward the assistants, and in this manner, solves the problem of his ambivalence. The uncanny effect is accomplished

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at once. In simulating death the animal is actually carrying on an activity which for it, is a profound expression of the will to live, and indeed is an essential function of its life. Yet, this very appearance of inanimateness, is for the observer remarkable at least, and presumably it is effective in the preservation of life in the real sense. Perhaps this behaviour may be regarded as one of the most primitive manifestations of the "death instinct" utilized to perpetuate life. Functionally, it serves the same purposes, as "doubling", which is discussed in the text.

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by making Klammer appear to divide himself into discrete active forms.

Two other factors add to the uncanny effect of Kafka's stories. One is the use of the "evil eye" figure, (the court and castle officials). In this case, there is a combination of a dangerous force plus its ability to do harm by supernatural powers. The other element (to which Freud gave only minor credit) is the state of intellectual uncertainty, which a reading of "The Trial", "The Castle", "America", and many of Kafka's shorter works invariably produces.

## II.

If the reader is struck with the feeling of uncanniness we certainly cannot imagine that K. in "The Castle", Joseph K. in "The Trial" or the many other characters that live in Kafka's works feel this way. On the contrary, it is indisputable that this is just such a state that is not being experienced by these symbolic figures, but rather one of longing or yearning. For example, in "The Castle", besides K's driving but artificial aggression to reach his goals there remains a sad awareness of the hopelessness of his attempts to unite sexually with the mother, to be at her breast, and still more deeply to reach the castle, the tensionless nirvana of the womb.

This element of yearning for what "had been" courses throughout Kafka's novels and stories and is seen in his diaries. It is the contention here that a characteristic of this feeling is that it is directed towards what had once been enjoyed either actually or in fantasy without guilt or anxiety.

It is interesting to note that although the denotation of the word "yearning" does not necessarily imply a wish for the reinstatement of something familiar, it is certainly far more frequently used in this sense than in any other. Thus, in Webster's New International Dictionary "to yearn" is defined as "to be uneasy with eager longing and anxiety;

to be drawn in love or desire", but the two examples of its use that are given denote a wish for contact with something already known, specifically, the home ("he yearned for news of his family; his heart yearns after the land of his birth"). At bottom, that which is ultimately yearned for, as noted above, is the peaceful, totally gratifying, completely protective inside of the mother, or to a lesser extent nearness to her.

We are able to see how confirmation of this appears etymologically. In French two of the verbs that express yearning are "soupirer" and "avoir envie". The former word also means "to sigh" or "to gasp", these actions being, of course, the first that occur after birth. "Envie" has two other meanings. On the one hand, it signifies envy or jealousy (an oral trait) and in this respect it is paralleled by the Gothic "faihugairns" (covetous) the root of which is "gairnjan" (to desire). This association of meanings proves to be nothing more than that made by the child who sees the younger sibling at the breast he himself yearns for. "Envie" when employed as a noun refers to a birthmark, and along with this observation, we find in English an archaic expression, the "longing-mark". The "longing-mark" according to the Oxford dictionary was a "birthmark, naevus (popularly supposed to be the impressed image of some object 'longed for' by the mother)".

In German "gern" signifying the state of desiring is related to "gier" or "greed", and in Old High German "ger" and "geri" have these two meanings respectively. Both of these examples reveal the relationship between another oral trait, greed, and the feelings of yearning.

That which is yearned for (taking yearning in the sense shown to be applicable to it) is fated never to be attained. As Peter Dow Webster stated in his excellent paper (5), "K. has known from the first day that he can never get to

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5. Webster, Peter Dow: A Critical Examination of Franz Kafka's "The Castle", *The American Imago*, Vol. 8, No. 1, March, 1951.

the castle, that every conceivable situation, relation, and force is loaded against him, for a man cannot return to his mother's womb when he is old — except in diabolical fantasy." It is this awareness on K's part, an awareness present in all states of yearning that always gives to this emotion an added feeling of sadness.

The foregoing material sheds light on the relationship between the feeling of the uncanny as it is produced by literary works and yearning. Both states deal with the attempted revival of infantile situations; in the first case this succeeds, in the second it fails and will always fail.

Two things stand in the way of fulfillment of what is yearned for. The ontogenetically more recent is the formation of the superego, which in itself presents an insurmountable barrier since, obviously, one can no longer fantasy an incestuous contact with the mother without guilt after its appearance. It is probably this factor in particular that is responsible for neurotic feelings of yearning, for a hoping against hope for the achievement of some future goal (unconsciously symbolizing the primal act), which when reached will not bring superego disapproval. But even before the fully matured superego is formed there are prohibitions deriving from the superego nuclei present in the earlier levels of libido development, so that the elimination of the most recent constellation of restrictions (those stemming from the Oedipal situation) if this were possible, would only be succeeded by a temporally anterior set of prohibitions. This, although less well organized, would take on relatively greater prominence because of its immediacy. With the removal of this layer another, more distant superego nucleus is found and must needs be destroyed, and so the process would continue. Since the earliest possibility of externally applied frustration is the birth trauma, we can see that the ultimate in this regressive series is the return to the womb.

The second preventing factor is the ego's inability to arbitrarily invoke animistic thinking processes. Without

the utilization of primitive beliefs it becomes impossible to surmount the limitations of time and space and thus impossible to be reborn, make the dead live again, etc. One recourse that the ego has is to live with the illusion that after life the yearning will be gratified where all dreams come true, heaven. But even if the possibility of death were recognized by the unconscious (as Freud denied) death itself is not what is really sought, for here one must postulate that dying is the equivalent of life within the mother's body, and, this is not tenable. Besides, the wish to die (as a means of restoring the intra-uterine bliss) would oppose the life preserving ego instincts and in this way produce instinctual conflict with resultant tension. What is yearned for is a living tensionless state rather than a tensionless state per se.

By what has been said we can surmise the essential difference between the feelings of yearning and uncanniness. In the former the impossible is not attained although still wished for; in the latter, with the aid of the return of long abandoned archaic processes of thought, the impossible does occur.

An important consideration is how yearning stands in relation to a wish and a symptom. Actually it is both. As a wish it draws its energy from id drives whose conscious ideational representations appear in what is claimed to be yearned for. The aim is to annihilate all tension created by superego or environmental frustration and the object by which this is to be achieved is the womb. The superego, of course, cannot be annihilated, and it is the ego's perception of this state of affairs, as well as the anxiety and guilt generated over the destructive impulses towards the superego, that results in the symptom. Yearning, as a symptom, appears as a feeling of melancholy straining, nostalgia, and hopelessness, as if the underlying attitude were "if it could only be but it can't". The gratification lies in the deeply unconscious fantasy of returning to prenatal life.

Depression is related to yearning in that here again

there is a conflict between ego and superego. However, in the former case it is hoped that by expiation the superego's sadism will be satiated, and it is to alleviate guilt for fantasied aggression that the ego submits itself to punishment, while in yearning the ego's final aim is to be completely free for all times from the superego. The only way this liberty is attainable is by the superego's liquidation.

The stimulus for the production of depression also varies from that which initiates yearning. Melancholy is precipitated by a narcissistic trauma whereas yearning results when some outside source triggers off the unconscious fantasies of regression to the fetal state.

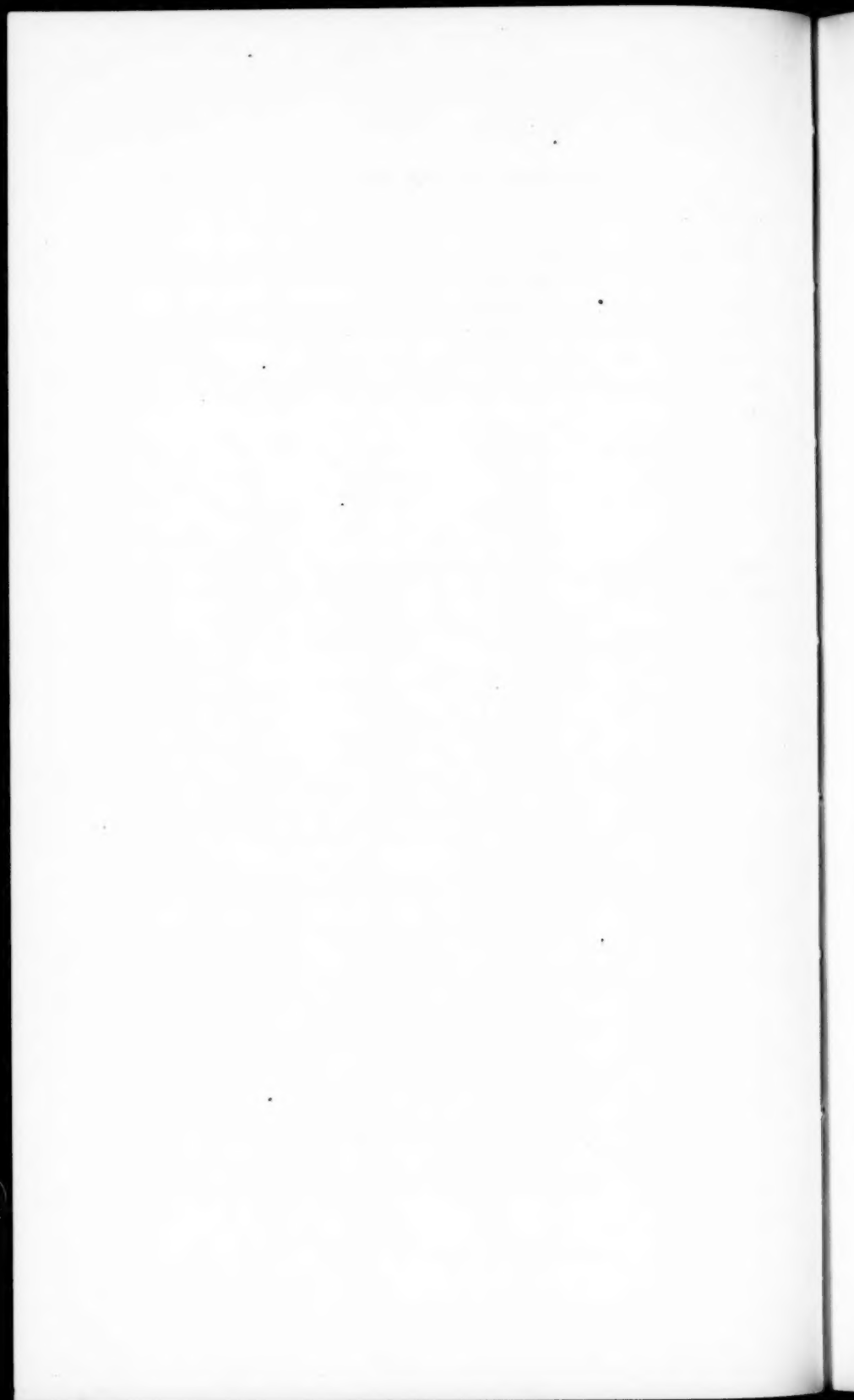
In mania the ego denies those conflicts besetting it, as well as its submission to the superego. Here no elimination of the superego occurs but a false and tenuous victory over it. The superego is overcome not by the use of animistic thinking processes (which could permit gratification of yearning), but by denying the effectiveness of its castigating power. The feeling of pathological elation which results is due to an intrapsychic process, whereas the perception of the ego that primitive beliefs that have been surmounted seem to be confirmed must be generated from outside sources, (literature, significant coincidences, etc). It is the ego's willingness to be deceived in its search for that which it yearns that predisposes to its feeling the uncanny.

One more postulate may be derived in regard to yearning and it is relative to the "intellectual uncertainty" also present at times in the production of the uncanny. Often people have longings which they cannot verbalize because of the vagueness of the ideation attached to these feelings. (6) The explanation of this lies in the temporal distance of the yearned for situation from the present and its depth

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6. This response is not infrequently associated with listening to certain music. The question as to why some individuals should cry on such occasions is understandable in terms of the feeling of yearning evoked so often by this art form.
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in the unconscious. In other words, the most recent and most conscious feelings will be perceived by the ego in the most specific or accurate manner, while the most unconscious and earliest feelings, such as those present in the fetus will be, when stimulated by the associative process, most vague and indefinite. These last two are the qualities that are most characteristic of the deepest feelings of yearning.

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# Psychopathology of Shakespeare's "King Lear"\*

Exemplification of the Lear Complex (A New Interpretation)

by

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**"I**N HIS Lear drama Shakespeare has composed something that bears the earmark of finality and that is all-embracing. Lear is the most powerful among his tragedies. We are justified in calling it the most powerful in all world literature. Never, not even by the Greeks, was tragedy in its cosmic significance so universally conceived and patterned as in this work. A fateful judgment, delusionally distorted, opens the entry for the dark powers into Lear's soul during the zenith of his royal power, which surrounds him even to the very end of his earthly existence. He falls victim to sycophants, while submitting to falsehood and deceit and rejecting the faithful and true. These are the preliminaries. And now Lear is cast out to follow the road of bitter experience. He struggles through the under-brush of pseudo-values and reaches the plains of reality, but his clothes and his heart are tattered by the thorns. While his understanding and insight grow clearer, his spirit becomes more and more confused and perplexed under the tension of the past and present." (3)

This is the usual pattern for the interpretation of the most

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powerful of all Shakespearean tragedies. Benedetto Croce says: "Humanity is here called by the name of old King Lear." (1)

But over and above this more or less spiritual approach, one is certainly justified in following the fate of the man Lear in his everyday vital humanity as well, since Lear even in his vital everyday life symbolizes humanity, the humaneness of an old man who is inescapably subjected to the laws of nature and earth.

The following exposition does not attempt to offer a substitute for the above interpretation, but will try to emphasize those traits in the character of the hero that have been neglected so far, though they contribute to a very great extent, to the tragic entanglement of Lear. We are thinking particularly of his attachment to his daughters, especially the third daughter. Not fatherly affection, in the everyday sense of the word, is meant here, but rather a specifically erotic affection, which may readily be compared to the child fixation in the Oedipus Complex as described by Freud, except that it is reversed.

This reverse erotic fixation will be called the *adult libido* and more specifically, the *Lear Complex*. The introduction of the concept of the adult libido tries to do justice to the instinctual cravings of adults toward children. The Lear complex endeavors to account for the specific erotic attachment of the father for his daughter. In establishing these concepts, an attempt is made to supplement the onesidedness of the infantile libido and Oedipus complex, which are concerned exclusively with the child or the infantile aspect of the adult, while completely disregarding the particular characteristics of adulthood as such. (8)

It is quite certain that the tragedy of Lear is neither merely a tragedy of children's ingratitude, nor a tragedy of adult libido fixation and the conflicts originating from it. "To reduce his (Lear's) misery to a single human characteristic would be to mistake the thrown-away match for the forest fire itself," says Gundolf (2), yet it would mean a great deal if

we were able to find the match that became responsible for the Learian forest fire.

To understand Lear, however, we can be satisfied neither with the usual psychiatric-pathographic method which sees in the hero only pathological manifestations, nor with the specific psychoanalytic method, which attempts to understand all the occurrences of the drama as well as all the inner experiences of the hero as the direct manifestation of the author's sexual life history. Rather, we intend to look at the work for its own sake and try to follow the hero in his unique life manifestation, as governed by his own autonomy. Insofar as possible, we shall try to avoid all prejudice and rule out all secondary considerations.

General medical or psychiatric-diagnostic statements such as: "acute perplexity;" "mania turned into dementia;" "paranoia;" "palpitatio cordis;" "general paresis;" (5) have little meaning in an understanding of Lear, nor do we think that psychoanalysis would contribute too much by claiming the existence of an Oedipus complex in Shakespeare himself.

As a curiosity, it should be mentioned here in passing, that Shakespeare is generally accorded high praise for his psychiatric and general medical knowledge and that much credit is given him for his excellent clinical descriptions.

Even were the aforementioned diagnoses correct, which we have every reason to doubt, would the tragedy of Lear be clearer and more understandable? Certainly not.

The key to an understanding of Lear's tragedy is exposed in the first scene. This is the scene, by the way that is blamed most for the difficulties in interpretation and that has led many literary historians, even men of the stature of Goethe, to misinterpret the character of the hero. Thuemmel remarks: "Lear's violent outbursts, precipitated by Cordelia's silence and Kent's contradiction, can be accounted for only on the assumption that he suffered from Caesarian ideas of grandeur, or as Elze expresses it, from a paranoid absolutism." (10)

Goethe, in his report about Shroeder's German translation

of the Lear drama, says: "It is true that Schroeder changed the character of the drama by leaving out the first scene of King Lear; but he was right, because Lear appears in an absurd light in this scene, and one feels almost like agreeing with his daughters. One pities the old man, but one feels no compassion for him. And that is what Schroeder wanted to provoke, together with abhorrence for the daughters who, undoubtedly, were inhuman, but not altogether blameworthy."

(7)

In connection with Thuemmel's and Elze's remarks, we are justified in saying that even literary historians and esthetes may err when dealing with problems beyond the realm of their competence. Goethe did realize the key position of the first scene. He felt that its omission would change the whole character of the play. However, even he failed to consider the real significance of the first scene which, indeed, is the clue to a true understanding of the drama, and therefore can scarcely be omitted.

Lear not only loves his daughters; he is also in love with them, especially with the youngest one. The division of his land is not due exclusively to the weariness of his age and government. It is, in addition, a kind of love-suit for the favor of his daughters, and when he is rejected by his third daughter, he behaves like any temperamental, fiery, imperious suitor would have behaved in the same situation.

In this sense he is actually "absurd." It is this rejection that really accounts for his boundless affectivity, his lack of insight and self-mastery and, to a very large extent, his future behavior as well.

Let us quote the controversial ideas of the drama itself:

*Lear* (I-I-51):

(9)

Tell me, my

daughters,

Since now we will divest us both of rule,  
Interest of territory, cares of state,  
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?

That we our largest bounty may extend  
Where nature doth with merit challenge.

*Goneril* (the eldest daughter I-I-58):

Sir, I love you more than words can wield  
the matter,  
Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty,  
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,  
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty,  
honor,  
As much as child e'er loved or father found;  
A love that makes breath poor and speech  
unable;  
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

*Regan* (second daughter I-I-72):

I am made of that self metal as my sister,  
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
I find she names my very deed of love;  
Only she comes too short: that I profess  
Myself an enemy to all other joys  
Which the most precious square of sense  
possesses,  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear highness' love.

The protestations of love of the two older daughters: "beyond all manners of so much I love you;" "I profess myself an enemy to all others joys;" "and find I am alone felicitate in your dear highness' love," go surely beyond the bounds of love which are due a father from his daughters.

These remarks, and perhaps even more the discreet and restrained utterance of the third daughter, make it quite clear that the daughters know their father's true interests rather well and that they are, with the exception of the third daugh-

ter, also willing, at least ostensibly, to submit themselves to the wishes of the father.

Cordelia, "our joy" (I-I-86), the third and favorite daughter from whom Lear is expecting to receive the acme of all love declarations, does not exaggerate. She is aware of her real duties; she recognizes the impossibility of her father's demands; and while setting them back within their proper boundaries, she blasts at her sisters' adulation and offers which never can be fulfilled.

*Cordelia* (I-I-95):

I love your majesty  
According to my bond; nor more nor less.

And later (I-I-99):

Good my lord,  
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I  
Return those duties back as are right fit,  
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.  
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say  
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,  
That lord whose hand must take my plight  
shall carry  
Half my love with him, half my care and  
duty:  
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,  
To love my father all.

"Why have my sisters' husbands," etc., are remarks with sufficiently clear indication on the one hand, that the father wants to be looked upon not only as a father but also as a man, and on the other hand, that a possible rivalry between father and husband for the claim and possession of the daughter is taken for granted. And these remarks originate from

the third daughter who is most emphatically the chosen object of her father's desires.

Lear loses his head, curses his youngest daughter, banishes his most faithful adherent, Kent. Why?

Did not Cordelia prove herself to be a loving daughter? Yes! But this does not satisfy the old man at all. He wants more, much more, and the vehemence and enormity of his wishes and desires are clearly indicated by the boundlessness of his reaction after resistance is encountered. It is interesting to note that as he disclaims his "paternal care," "propinquity" and "property of blood" for Cordelia, he uses words which significantly objectify "the barbarous Scythian" appetite for "his generation."

*Lear (I-I-119):*

The barbarous

Scythian,

Or he that makes his generation messes

To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom

Be as well neighbor'd, pitied, and relieved,

As thou my sometime daughter.

We see Lear's adult libido echoed again in the course of events, although it is sometimes ambivalently disguised. The favorite child who was nearest to his heart becomes a "little seeming substance" (I-I-201), a hateful being, "whom nature is ashamed almost to acknowledge her" (I-I-216). However, something else that is very remarkable occurs. Lear, instead of making an effort to get rid of the hated being, almost dissuades the suitors of his daughter from an alliance with her; and when the King of France refuses to be influenced or intimidated, Lear lets him go without "grace," "love," and "benison."

What are the motives for Lear's strange actions? Does he want to hold Cordelia back after all? Does he perhaps warn the suitors with his own specific goal in mind? Does he re-





as they remain organically and meaningfully correlated with the hero and with his actions and complexities.

This is the clue which helps us to understand Edmund's prophecies as he reveals them to his brother Edgar.

*Edmund (I-II-168) :*

death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches.

And partly the prophecy about (I-II-167) :  
unnaturalness between  
the child and the parent;

Not all the prophecies are confirmed by the succeeding happenings but many serve as inflammable material precipitating further complications.

The older daughters with whom Lear, contemplated staying for the rest of his life, following the division of his realm, turned out to be ungrateful, heartless, detestable and vile. According to the prevalent Lear interpretation, the ingratitude of the children is made the central point of Lear's fate and tragical development. However, one may account for the unnatural behavior of the daughters in another way.

Unquestionably, Lear is the suffering victim here. Why? Is his suffering due primarily to his daughters' ingratitude, or to something else? Who provokes the daughters' ingratitude? Is not it Lear through his behavior and through the fatefulness of his particular daughter attachment!

*Lear (I-IV-74) :*

I have perceived a most faint  
neglect of late; which I have rather blamed

---

as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretense and purpose of unkindness:

Apart from the fact that his demands on his daughters appear to be sometimes too kingly, he himself recognizes his "own jealous curiosity," which may provoke the daughterly behavior.

"Even the slightest reaction is related rigidly to the idea of the whole. We do not forget for a second that Lear is guilty for all suffering and misdeeds in the drama." "The guilt must come freely out of the heart of man, due to passions, without any external lever. The scenes of the drama are the scenes within the inner-most soul of the hero; the actual unraveling of the plot and the suffering, the guilt and punishment and their connections, one's destiny, must take place within; the external unraveling only follows that what went on inward, and should never appear as really important." These are Otto Ludwig's remarks in his "Dramatische Studien" in connection with his analysis of the Lear drama. (6)

Basically, Lear's fate is decided within. His daughters' behavior towards him is therefore the natural consequence of Lear's inner transformation and so Lear becomes guilty and responsible even for the baseness of his daughters. That is his destiny. In view of the role which Lear played in provoking the base ingratitude of his daughters one should emphasize the direct meaning and significance of it for Lear's particular fate rather than the ingratitude itself. If one of the most important driving forces in the formation of Lear's fate is his particular attachment to his third daughter, then the ingratitude of the two other daughters becomes almost a necessity. The third daughter was cast off, now she must be found again, by every possible means. If the two older daughters had given shelter to Lear, then Cordelia to him would have been lost forever. Lear has to suffer in order to find her again, and his road of suffering leads him directly to her. Or in other words, Lear could not have been happy with Goneril and Regan even if these daughters had surrounded him with

the most tender filial affection and satisfied all his desires. He could not have been happy with them since his heart belonged to Cordelia alone.

However, Lear would have been ready to submit to his fate and willing to reduce the number of his Knights, the living symbol of his Royal Dignity, to be permitted to stay with his daughters, if the forces which he originally conjured up had not turned against him. But the ingratitude of his daughters was so devilishly cruel, their actions so infamous and despicable, that submission would have meant disgrace and degradation for the old Sovereign. And that, he could never bear. He would rather face thunder and lightning, storm and tempest, night and madness.

Lear tastes all the forms of misery; he experiences shocks of the most terrifying kind; learns to know that (III-IV-1114) "poor, bare, forked animal," man, and as he finally meets Cordelia again his purification becomes complete and his destiny fulfilled. "Thus, the beginning is indeed preparation and the end is fulfillment." (Otto Ludwig) (6)

Lear reaches insight through madness. But this madness really saves him from an unbearable situation. The occasional light-flashes within this spiritual twilight show him the way to his goal, also the understanding of this goal. The nearer the goal, the more comprehensible it becomes.

Lear struggles with the angry elements, "catarracts and hurricanoes," "sulphurous and thought-executing fires," "oak-cleaving thunderbolts," and righteously inveighs against the sins and sinners of the world.

*Lear* (III-II-50):

Let the great gods,  
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,  
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou  
wretch,  
That hast within the undivulged crimes,  
Unwhipp'd of justice: hide thee, thou bloody  
hand;

Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue  
 That art incestuous: caitiff, to pieces shake,  
 That under covert and convenient seeming  
 Has practised on man's life: close pent-up  
     guilts,  
 Rive your concealing continents and cry  
 These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man  
 More sinn'd against than sinning.

In the enumeration of horrors almost all the prophecies of Edmund, including incest, are repeated. Lear, too, admits that he is a sinner. Which sin of those enumerated did he commit? Which did he intend to commit?

The raging storm keeps on, "invades . . . to the skin," but even more powerful is the tempest in the mind which takes all feeling from the senses.

*Lear (III-IV-12):*

The tempest in my mind  
 Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
 Save what beat there. Filial ingratitude!  
 Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand  
 For lifting food it 't? But I will punish home  
 No, I will weep no more. In such a night  
 To shut me out! Pour on: I will endure.  
 In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!  
 You rold kind father, whose frank heart gave  
     you all,—

In spite of the storm Lear is unwilling to seek protection in the hut. He feels that it is best for him to stay outside, because (III-IV-24):

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
 On things would hurt me more.

What are these things to ponder which would hurt

him so? Surely, not the ingratitude of the children, since circumstances forced him long enough to do just that. What he ponders in spite of the continued tempest and the heavenly Armageddon, is the essence of his earthly suffering, the foundation of his vital struggle, a concealed form of adult libido, for and against his daughters.

This motive recurs again a little later. The storm still rages. Lear encounters the disguised madman, Edgar, and speaks to him the following lordly - tragic words:

*Lear* (III-IV-113):

unaccommodated man is no more  
but such a poor, bare, forked animal  
while tearing off his clothes.

A sublime and moving atmosphere is created but the Fool does not care for the loftiness of the moment. He lives up to his role and says things perhaps not exactly befitting the circumstances but nearer to the bitter truth.

*Fool* (III-IV-118):

Now a little fire  
in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart,  
a small spark, all the rest on's body cold.

What could be the meaning of such an expression as "an old lecher's heart?" Who is meant by the Fool? Who is the man immoderately given to sexual indulgence, or to free indulgence of lust?

The misery and despair of Lear are perhaps nowhere more conspicuous, his fate never so pitiful as in the scene, where the once all-powerful Sovereign, the kind father who gave away his all, sits in judgment upon his daughters. He has gone mad and he makes the half-naked Edgar with his (III-IV-31) "loop'd and window'd draggedness," (III-VI-24) "the most learned justicer," (III-IV-38) "robed man of justice," and the Fool (III-IV-24) "to sapient sir." (III-

IV-39) "the yoke-fellow of equity" of Edgar's and Kent, member of the (III-IV-41) "commission."

Nobody's eyes remain dry meanwhile. Edgar's tears begin to take Lear's part so much, that they mar his counterfeiting. (III-VI-64) Only to Lear is granted the privilege of becoming the mighty ruler again by pronouncing royal judgment over his daughters. It is true, that this is not a real triumph, but it exemplifies one of the purposes of his madness.

In the fields near Dover, not far from the French Military Camp, Lear, fantastically bedecked with wild flowers, meets the blinded Gloucester and Edgar. And here he is king again. "I am the king himself." (IV-VI-83). "Every inch a king," (IV-VI-III), who succeeded already to overcome the effect of his daughters' behavior, who "flattered him like a dog." (IV-VI-99).

New motives appear, however, in the chain of his associations which require new interpretation. Adultery, incest, fantastic erotic images seem to dominate Lear's mental life. Some of these images are unmistakably personally determined:

*Lear* (IV-VI-113):

I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?

Adultery?

Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No:

The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly

Does lecher in my sight.

Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son

Was kinder to his father than my daughters

Got 'tween the lawful sheets.

To 't, luxury, pell-mell! for I lack soldiers.

Behold yon simpering dame,

Whose face between her forks presages snow,

That minces virtue and does shake the head

To hear of pleasure's name;

The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to 't

With a more riotous appetite.

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,



Though women all above:  
But to the girdle do the gods inherit,  
Beneath is all the fiends';  
There's hell, there's darkness, there's the sulphurous pit,  
Burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie,

We cannot fail to recognize that Lear's fantasies are increasingly earmarked by sexual coloring. And what is the meaning of Lear's following words?

*Lear (IV-VI-166):*  
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;  
Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind  
For which thou whip'st her.

Is it not that he himself wants to be vindicated, for his own lustfulness? And is not the essence of his remarks:

*Lear (IV-VI-191):*  
And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in-law,  
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

that he wants to get rid of his sons-in-law, that they have to be killed six times to be really eliminated? The direction of his lustful fantasies becomes even more specific when they find expression in the following statement:

*Lear (IV-VI-206):*  
I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom.

With what purpose and meaning were these remarks expressed? Perhaps the answer is not so difficult to find if we know that they were addressed to the messenger of Cordelia, a gentleman whose job it was to conduct Lear to her and to safety. What could be the significance of the word: "Bride-

groom," uttered by Lear when a meeting is about to be effected between him and Cordelia?

The full significance of this remark becomes even more obvious if we observe Lear's conduct toward Cordelia after both of them became prisoners in the hands of their worst enemies. Lear does not act the proud, the powerful, the imperious king as would have been expected of him under normal conditions. Rather, he accepts the fact that he is a prisoner in his own land, prisoner of his once most favored subjects, and that he has become the object of the deepest humiliation. He accepts all these facts without any reaction of vehemence, and without displaying any other exaggerated emotions. Why? What has happened? He does not think any longer of the ingratitude of his two older daughters. He forgets his superhuman suffering precipitated by their cruelty. He forgets even his growing wisdom acquired in general humaneness while undergoing the process of purification. He has learned humility, conquered self-mastery and become mellower and softer. He goes with Cordelia to the prison without rebellion, without passionate outbursts and without resistance. Imagine! Lear, the irascible, the imperious, the "every inch a king" in prison without protest. What caused this remarkable change of mind?

He has met Cordelia; he has regained Cordelia; he has Cordelia. And now he behaves as if all his former struggle and suffering had served this very purpose only. He behaves like the happy bridegroom who, after long effort and dangers, regains his bride when she seemed to be almost hopelessly lost. He behaves like the man whose fate is fulfilled, and who in the fulfillment of his fate forgets everything else, as Lear actually does:

*Lear (V-III-7):*

Come, let's way to prison:

We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:

When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down

And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,  
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and  
     laugh  
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
 Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them  
     too,  
 Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out;  
 And take upon's the mystery of things,  
 As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,  
 In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great  
     ones  
 That ebb and flow by the moon.

With this new meaning in mind, even the last stages of Lear's madness, before he meets Cordelia, become illuminated in retrospect. After Kent's explanation, his mind clears up, his mood improves and he begins to realize why he was taken to the neighborhood of the French Army Camp. But he does not want to see Cordelia. He is so overwhelmed by his guilt and shame that he shies away from her.

*Kent* (IV-III-45):

his own

unkindness

That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd  
     her

To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights  
 To his dog-hearted daughters: These things  
     sting

His mind so venomously that burning shame  
 Detains him from Cordelia.

Then we find him in the wilderness.

*Cordelia* (IV-IV-59):

As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;  
 Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,

With bur-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-  
flowers,  
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow  
In our sustaining corn.

We have already mentioned the lustfulness of Lear's fantasy when meeting Gloucester and Edgar and we have quoted his answer to Cordelia's messenger. Is it too daring and far-fetched to look at Lear's kaleidoscopic transformation in terms of a meaningful unity, to try to understand all Lear's fantastic ideas and imaginings, his actions and conduct, his guilt and shame as the manifestations of his most basic longing: To be united as the bridegroom, with Cordelia the bride?

*Lear (V-III-20):*

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,  
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I  
caught thee?  
He that parts us shall bring a brand from  
heaven,  
And fire us hence like foxes.

These are the words of Lear, as he and Cordelia are taken to the prison by the guards.

But where is the King of France, the gallant spouse of Cordelia? How do we account for the fact that this son-in-law, the noble suitor of Cordelia and saviour of Lear does not appear in the scene at all? Is it natural or is it only accidental that the man-father-Lear has his corresponding counterpart in the drama in the person of the woman-daughter-Cordelia? Is it not remarkable that the role of the King of France is centered, besides wooing Cordelia, in the condemnation of Lear's "most strange" behavior toward her? Or how do we interpret the absence of Lear's wife, the mother of the daughters, who is mentioned in the whole drama only once and even then condemned as an adultress. Of course, it

is only Lear's hypothesis to account for the possible reason for his daughters' depravity.

At the end, Lear pulls himself together once more. He acts youthful and heroic and avenges the death of his Cordelia by killing the murderer.

*Lear* (V-III-274) :

Her voice was ever

soft,

Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.

Were Cordelia alive, it would redeem all sorrows that Lear ever felt. But she does not live anymore, and thus life loses all meaning to Lear too. However, his death symbolizes a new meaning. After the death of his bride, he dies also "bravely," as a "smug bridegroom" and in death his destiny becomes fulfilled. The lovers will be united in death, since owing to the nature of things, they could not have been united otherwise. This motive also forms the core of the Wagnerian *Tristan-Isolde* music-drama.

And in this context, we understand Cordelia's death as something inevitable in relation to the fortunes of Lear.

Cordelia, the embodiment of generous spirit and tender beauty, could not stay alive. She had to perish, not only because genuine nobleness has no place in this world, which prefers to drag such souls through the mud, but also because, in the strictest sense of the word, she had no life of her own. Her death as well as the ingratitude of her sisters were compelling necessities, determined by the structured conflict of the hero, Lear, and by his final tragic destiny. This fateful and compelling necessity is manifested as well in the death of Gloucester, the hero of the parallel action of the drama. Gloucester's "flawed heart burst smilingly" after the reunion with his beloved, once cast-off son, Edgar, and so his destiny too, is complete.

Although the Lear complex plays a decisive role in the development and patterning of the character of the hero in

the Lear Tragedy, it would be erroneous to reduce all the richness of the drama's characters and actions to one single motive. What makes this most powerful of all Shakespearean dramas really so powerful, is that it reveals again and again, newer enigmas and newer meaningful relations which never can be unravelled onesidedly or rationalistically. The "Case Lear" is not considered by any means, solved or settled by the demonstration of the Lear Complex. It cannot even be said that Lear's madness is completely understood. It would of course, be easy to be satisfied with such general statements as: "flight into sickness" or "the pathological symptoms are wish-fulfillments," but what would be gained by such generalizations? Shakespeare very likely paid little attention to the psychiatric-diagnostic efforts, or to the medical controversies of his contemporary physicians and he would be greatly surprised at the credit given to him for his general medical knowledge and diagnostic acumen. But perhaps he would be even more surprised to learn about the contradictory opinions concerning his hero's psychopathology, if it were at all possible to submit them to him for substantiation.

All narrow-clinical efforts miss the point, in advance, if their energies are spent in diagnostic sophistries.\* After all, diagnostic considerations were never really the concern of Shakespeare. Had he wanted to describe "the acute perplexity or bewilderment" for instance, it would have been quite superfluous for him to create the King Lear drama. The fact, however, that he created it imposes the obligation to judge the madness of the king, not as a single isolated instance, but rather as the manifestation of the whole drama, as it is expressed by, and structured through Lear.

From this point of view, Lear's madness

*Edgar (IV-VI-181):*

O, matter and impertinency mix'd!

Reason in madness!

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\*See: Pauncz, A.: *Psychiatrists Look at King Lear*, to be published soon.

has many meanings of various levels and complexities. Lear within and through his madness reaches the highest stratum, serving as the tragic symbol of all humankind. During his madness he becomes again royally triumphant over his depraved daughters, displaying also those characteristics which help to pattern the vital aspects of his being.

What does such a madness have to do with the madness of psychiatric denomination? Lear does not become mad because he suffers from some complexes, but in the course of his madness all possible complexes become meaningful and obvious. The complexes, however, no matter how intense and effective, do not make the man, and when Shakespeare lets the whole man become mad, he opens up new perspectives which reach beyond the foundation of human existence. "It is, as if the final source of human existence would temporarily become visible, as if the hidden motivations of all living beings would get here directly effectuated." (Jaspers) (4)

That the old man has to woo for love, and that due to his fateful attachment, he has to woo for the love of his own daughter, is the earthly aspect of Lear's tragedy. That he woos for love at the summit of his kingly dignity and reaches happiness only at the depths of human existence, actually beyond human existence, in death, is the cosmic aspect of his tragedy. Thus his fate becomes the moving symbol of the old man and, at the same time, the everlasting symbol of all mankind.



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## Is Psychic Masochism An "Oversimplification"?

by

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One who speaks lightly and disparagingly of the power of conscience is more than naive: he plays handball with an atomic bomb which he mistakes for a toy.

From the author's *THE WRITER AND PSYCHOANALYSIS*, p. 18.

**P**SYCHIC masochism is the scourge of humanity. An individual whose *unconscious* aim is the enjoyment of self-constructed defeat, humiliation and suffering, for which he pays with *consciously* perceived depression (as conscience-money and alibi combined), must inevitably have a personal history which is "not too happy." And even analysts admit that people lead their lives on the conscious as well as the unconscious level.

It was Freud who established the universality of this problem, as well as the *genetic* picture in psychic (moral) masochism. The genesis comprises: aggression, guilt, libidinalization of guilt. My contribution to the problem did not consist of blowing-up what was already known, but of describing the *clinical* picture in psychic masochism, and its interconnection with the oral level of regression. This clinical picture comprises the "mechanism of orality," consisting of three steps:

- I. I shall provoke (or misuse) a situation in which someone

(representative of the pre-oedipal "bad mother") will deny my wishes.

- II. Not being conscious that I provoked the situation of refusal, I shall see only the cruelty of my self-created enemy, fighting him with the greatest aggression (pseudo-aggression) and with a feeling of righteous indignation, seemingly in self-defense.
- III. Having received the expected slap in the face, I shall retire to my lachrymal corner, complaining bitterly about my fate ("This could happen only to poor little me"), and unconsciously enjoying, again, psychic masochistic pleasure.

The number of misconceptions surrounding both the genetic and the clinical pictures of psychic masochism is limitless; in my book, *THE BASIC NEUROSIS*, I made a sampling of these errors, enumerating ten scientific and ten popular misunderstandings, to which the reader is referred.

The newest of these misunderstandings has been provided by a psychologist of the Washington school, who naively came out with his grievance in the book review section of *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, of all places. (June 17, 1951) His objection reads:

"Psychic masochism is Dr. Bergler's particular hobby horse which he has ridden across the pages of several books. He believes it is the 'decisive factor' in all neurosis. This dogma obscures the dynamic interplay of personal relations in the family and group in generating neurosis. Even for 'neurotics', masochism is not an end in itself but a means. Hence as a central explanatory conception, Dr. Bergler's formula strikes me as a gross over-simplification of human aspiration."

The good man (one Patrick Mullahy) is so irritated with the whole business of psychic masochism, with which he was confronted in reviewing my book, *MONEY AND EMOTIONAL CONFLICTS*, that he even concedes what reviewers seldom do — excellence of style:

"This book is often lively, witty, entertaining."

Victorious ambivalence does not let it go at that, but continues:

"It is also cocksure, dogmatic and replete with large generalizations."

One can argue about the ethics involved in accepting a book for review in a popular publication (daily, weekly, monthly) when the reviewer, because of adherence to a specific school or group, is a "scientific enemy" of the viewpoint presented by the author. There is a difference between writing a polemic review for a scientific publication, whose readers are familiar with prevailing differences of opinion among different schools, and writing a review for a popular publication in the guise of an objective expert, thus presenting one's own biased judgments to an unsuspecting and scientifically uninformed public. In my opinion, the only correct procedure is to disqualify oneself from judgment in such a situation. Mullahy did not do that.

Let us leave Mr. Mullahy and what "*strikes*" him (couldn't he have found a less revealing word to use in *refuting* psychic masochism?) to his own problems, and concentrate on the complaint of "oversimplification." Although Mullahy expressed this objection with childlike naivete, and with malice, it is worth looking into because it corresponds, tangentially, to an impression held by some more serious colleagues.

First of all, the emotional problem must be disposed of. The blunt fact is that psychic masochism, even though it is a universal problem, is only rarely analyzed in therapeutic and didactic analyses. It is truly tragicomic to see young analysts and patients of all ages "finishing" their respective analyses without having had the slightest inkling of what, in my opinion, is the basis of all neuroses. The reasons for this spectacle, emotional in scope, are best expressed in Freud's own words:

"Another motive of opposite wish dreams lies so near that one easily falls into the trap of overlooking it, as had happened

to myself over a longer period of time . . . the masochistic component." (Ges. Schriften 3,30; my italics.)

The trap Freud mentions seems to be common analytic property, spreading to include adjacent areas; it is still being overlooked, and therefore the error is not being corrected in individual analysis.

The formulation, "psychic masochism is a gross oversimplification of human aspiration", is downright silly: obviously, the conscious human aspiration of every person is conscious happiness. The fact that the unconscious conscience counteracts this noble aim is another story. Conveniently, consciousness is confused with the unconscious — something which shouldn't happen to a psychologist of any denomination.

But even assuming that only clumsy and unprecise (hence unscientific) wording is involved, and the allusion is really to unconscious "aspirations" — (what's wrong with the word "wish"?) — self-damaging tendencies, unconsciously enjoyed to boot, are clearly no small matter. Either one must deny that psychic masochism exists (as difficult as denying the existence of the sun), or one must optimistically minimize its impact as far as deleterious results are concerned (equally difficult), or one must construct some attenuating circumstance which will transform a *boa constrictor* into a *harmless pet*. ("Pet theory.")

The second part of the alleged "oversimplification" is contained in the statement that "even for 'neurotics' masochism is not an end in itself but a means." After having overcome one's surprise at seeing neurotics put in quotation marks (don't they exist, or is this also my personal oversimplification?), one wonders what the end of the means could be. To win friends and influence people?

There exists another explanation, one which sounds more reasonable, and has been repeatedly promoted privately and in our literature: the purpose of masochism is to win love from an otherwise unapproachable parent. Since normal love cannot be achieved, the child provokes attention by naughti-

ness, parental punishment substituting for the love-aim. Secondly, this pattern is libidinized, and becomes the leading pattern in the personality.

The idea of masochism as love-surrogate has the advantage of by-passing the painful: how can psychic masochism — without any strings attached — be an aim? This explanation may serve as a consoling fantasy, but I can see no other point in avoiding a painful scientific fact. The best I can say for this theory is that I would like to see it verified. Unfortunately, the chances are slim, if not non-existent. The decisive reason is that *the child's development is not a simple photographic copy of the environment, plus his biological endowment. The third and decisive element is the elaboration of both by the child's unconscious ego. And it is exactly this element which is overlooked when the blame is placed squarely on the parents.*

The private discussion, conducted time and again, can be boiled down to this argument: A mother (father) never treats two children in the same way; there are always (imperceptible) differences. This is adduced to disprove the star argument of the opposing party: Two boys, both rejected by a neurotic mother, can later in life either *correct* or *perpetuate* the situation of being unloved; one marries a loving woman, the other a shrew. Here the discussion hits an impasse: Who can prove or measure the imperceptible?

I had the opportunity to analyze a young woman whose mother showed no tenderness whatever to any of her six children. She believed that even kissing was dangerous, because of the germs which would be transmitted. Her obsessional neurosis (which existed long before her marriage) forced her to treat *all* of her children alike. No imperceptible differences were possible. Nonetheless, her children grew up to be very different personalities; some were normal, and some neurotic. Among the latter, no uniformity was discernible either.

As a further complication, the child does not see reality as it is, but through the spectacles of his own projection.

Even a lenient mother or father, therefore, can become an ogre in the child's eyes. These projectively misconstrued parents are later introjected into the ego ideal. Hence, clearing the parents' objective record is of little help.

Moreover, the child's aggression, potentially present in adult strength, is unusable for years and, as Freud proved, accumulates in the inner conscience. ("Daimonion," according to Jekels and Bergler; for elaboration, see *THE BATTLE OF THE CONSCIENCE*.)

There is but one point on which honest misunderstanding may exist. Adherents of the "pet theory" of psychic masochism may have the erroneous impression that adherents to the theory that masochism is of basic importance in neurosis, like myself, advocate that other therapeutically established and analytically commonplace facts should be neglected. Nothing of this sort was, of course, ever suggested; only an additional element is provided.

Furthermore, these discussions are so concentrated on the home situation, which is but the raw material, that another decisive factor is overlooked — infantile megalomania. It is exactly the autarchic fiction, and constant offense against it, which have to be worked out by the child.

Too frequently, colleagues fail to take into account the fact that "libidinous frustration," exemplified in less-than-instantaneous wish-fulfillment, produces *two* frustrations in the child: offense to megalomania *and* libidinous frustration. Both of these, in their turn, produce fury. It is exactly the inner handling or mishandling of this fury which is one of the determining factors in the individual's personal history.

To complicate matters further, psychic masochism is genetically not an id-wish, but an ingenious defense mechanism. When punishment, guilt, moral reproach are libiditized, the power of the educator (and later of inner conscience) is reduced to absurdity: an externally presumed deterrent becomes an inner allure. Thus, psychic masochism is one of the most powerful weapons of the unconscious ego in the "battle of the conscience." Only secondarily, psychic masochism



achieves the valency of an id wish — for all practical purposes.

Finally, the objection of “over-simplification” of psychic masochism gratuitously misunderstands its own large “generalization.” Since psychic masochism is produced as a weapon against the superego, the whole importance of the latter is negated by the objection that this defense is overvalued. Now, to negate the importance and impact of the inner conscience means to negate the whole progress of psychoanalysis, and consequently the work done by Freud during the last twenty years of his life. Coming from a psychologist, the objection smacks of absurdity.

Mr. Mullahy also claims that psychic masochism is my hobby-horse. This disparaging remark boomerangs: there is nothing “hobby-ish” about the sufferings of masochists. To make fun of the study of masochism in neurotics is as revealing of medical ignorance as it would be to say that a man who devotes his time to the study of leprosy has “made a hobby of leprosy.” As Voltaire put it, “Jesting is frequently an evidence of the poverty of the understanding.”

By the way, the involuntary irony of the objection of “oversimplification” becomes apparent only when one remembers how frequently the opposite objection — “masochism is *too* complicated” — is heard. In any case, turning the tables gives one full marks, in the field of naivete.

Comparing the highly involved problems embedded in psychic masochism with Mullahy’s criticism that it is “over-simplified,” one can but say that a person who speaks lightly of the danger of masochism can be compared with a person who earnestly claims that the atom bomb is an over-simplification of — a child’s toy. One can imagine an Oak Ridge scientist’s reply to such a statement, especially if it came from a person who wanted to be acknowledged as a fellow scientist.

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